



BEYOND THE MAINSTREAM:

The Cultural Environment of Asia Minor as a Matrix for Expressions of a Highest God

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Thesis

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Summary of Thesis

In the first three centuries CE Asia Minor supported a diverse network of human communities within an overarching Hellenistic cultural mainstream. Within this network existed cultural and ethnic groups described in this thesis as minority groups. Here I build on studies which bring out the tenacity of minority cultural groups against a cultural mainstream. Through processes which I explain by assimilation theory, minority groups remained distinct from mainstream traditional Hellenistic pagan culture even as they engaged with it and with each other.

Conflict and competition between groups, Hellenisation, Romanisation and minority group influence on the cultural environment of Asia Minor contributed to the development of a new religious situation. In an atmosphere of religious change, the role of individuals became more prominent. This resulted in a rise in the presence of cults requiring conscious choice of membership. Cults of this type included those which looked to one highest god.

In the acculturating spaces of interaction between different groups creative new ideas about god emerged. These ideas were expressed in cult through religious practices which included: public confession, the rule of divine justice, *angeloi* devotion, identification of abstract deities, the activities of the *theosebeis*, worship of Theos Hypsistos, and the production of theological oracles. In the first three centuries CE, these practices and the ideas about god which gave rise to them crossed cultural groups, and they indicated a shift toward monotheism.

Other scholars have said there was a trend toward monotheism in Asia Minor. This thesis explains within a framework of assimilation theory, and by challenging assumptions about syncretism in these practices, why there was a developing trend toward monotheism.

This thesis tests whether the cultural environment of Asia Minor was a matrix for expressions of a highest god by studying evidence for cultic practices indicating monotheism, and by considering the theological texts that emerged from this context. Some of the oracles produced in the second and third centuries give insight into new ways of talking about god, which was a shift from traditional pagan religion.

In this thesis, I suggest that a theological oracle from Oinoanda in Asia Minor and the Kolossian hymn contain monotheistic expressions of god which were based in common cultural origins and a shared environment. These texts speak about the nature of god in language which was current and which gained greater currency as the cultural environment made way for the intersection and exchange of theological ideas.

This thesis contributes to scholarship in biblical and classical studies in Asia Minor by using a modern framework of assimilation theory to expose an ancient cultural environment in which monotheistic expressions of god emerged in cult and theology.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Candidate's signature:

Date: 26 December 2016

Acknowledgements

This thesis has emerged from thinking about people from long ago, trying to imagine their lives and experiences, get close to them. It's been a journey through language, texts and ideas about god that have constantly surprised me and affirmed for me that the human perception of the divine is present in every time and every culture. Getting to the end only makes me realise it's an opening to so much more.

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Abbreviations

<i>AS</i>	<i>Anatolian Studies</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de Correspondence Hellénique</i>
<i>CIG</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>
<i>CIJ</i>	J. B. Frey, <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum I-II</i> , 1939, 1951
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>CIRB</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani</i>
<i>CMRDM</i>	E. N. Lane, <i>Corpus Monumentorum Religionis Dei Menis</i> , 4 vols., Leiden, 1971-8.
<i>CRAIBL</i>	<i>Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i>
<i>DI</i>	Albert Rehm and Ricahrd Harder, <i>Didyma II: Die Inschriften</i> (Berlin: Mann, 1958)
<i>EA</i>	<i>Epigraphica Anatolia</i>
<i>GIBM</i>	<i>Greek Inscriptions in the British Museum</i>
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>IJO</i>	Walter Ameling, <i>Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis Band ii: Kleinasien</i>
<i>IGRR</i>	R. Cagnas <i>et al.</i> , <i>Incriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes</i>
<i>IGUR</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae Urbis Romae</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>

<i>LSJ</i>	Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, Roderick McKenzie, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , 9 th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959)
<i>MAMA</i>	<i>Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua</i>
<i>NT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>OGIS</i>	<i>Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i>
<i>PHI</i>	Packard Humanities Institute, <i>Searchable Greek Inscriptions</i> (Cornell University and Ohio State University) www.inscriptions.packhum.org
<i>REA</i>	<i>Revue des Études Anciennes</i>
<i>RECAM</i>	<i>Regional Epigraphic Catalogues of Asia Minor</i>
<i>REJ</i>	<i>Revue des Études Juives</i>
<i>SCI</i>	<i>Scripta Classica Israelica</i>
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
<i>SIG</i>	W. Wittenberger, <i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>
<i>TAM</i>	<i>Tituli Asiae Minoris</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

Epigraphic Sigla

[αβγ]	Restoration of missing text
[-]	Brief lacuna of uncertain letters
[—]	Longer lacuna of uncertain letters
[...]	Lacuna of certain letters
	Line change
(αβγ)	Editor's corrections/insertions
—	Word continues onto next line

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an early encounter with a simplified intermediate version of Plato's *Phaidros* when returning to school to complete secondary education as a young adult, I met with a pagan conception of one god. This unexpected discovery perplexed and challenged me, led me along a journey through the Greek and Roman world. There I found many and diverse expressions of god and gods. I learned that 'the' god of my background tradition was honoured by many different groups of people who heard the voice of god speak to them in many ways. The discovery that there were pagan monotheists was an original impetus of this thesis.

At the heart of this study are people. It is people in relationship with each other and with their god that are foundational for the research reflected in the work here. This study explores the perspective of people and groups who were marginal to the cultural mainstream. In the margins, outside of the mainstream, creative ideas and distinct practices toward god emerged.

In this thesis, I present a body of evidence to argue that in Asia Minor in the first three imperial centuries ideas of one highest god developed among different minority cultural groups into practical cultic expression. These ideas were intellectually conceived and developed in the preceding centuries. Alongside this, I argue that the cultural environment provided a matrix which enabled the practical cultic expressions of a highest god to grow and flourish. A matrix functions as a network of communities, organisations and people forming an interconnected whole.¹ It was people engaging with each other as

¹ *Macquarie Australian Dictionary*, Fifth Edition (Sydney, Australia: Macquarie Dictionary Publishers Pty Ltd, 2010).

communities, organisations and individuals as a cohering matrix which supported innovation, creativity, sharing and growth in religious ideas.

I utilise a theory of assimilation of people and groups in relationship with a cultural mainstream to present the cultural environment as an enabling matrix for monotheistic expressions of god. Assimilation theory has come from the modern study of immigrant and ethnic groups adapting to a new dominant culture. The subprocesses of assimilation in this study explain how minority groups in the ancient context of Asia Minor engaged with each other and with mainstream Hellenistic culture. Assimilation theory provides a basis for providing a hypothesis as to why the cultural environment unique to Asia Minor was a matrix which enabled monotheism among minority groups.

There has been significant scholarship in recent years on the topic of pagan monotheism. The studies of Stephen Mitchell, Michael Frede and Angelos Chaniotis,² among others, have made great inroads into an area fraught with bias and controversy. Much of the work of this thesis is built on the foundations of these scholars. There has also been a great deal of excellent work in Jewish monotheism and the distinctiveness of Jews in communities dispersed throughout the

² Especially significant for the study of pagan monotheism in this thesis are: Stephen Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men and Gods in Asia Minor*, Vol. 1 *The Celts in Anatolia and the Impact of Roman Rule* and Vol. 2 *The Rise of the Church*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos between pagans, Jews, and Christians,” in P. Athanassiadi and M. Frede (eds.), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999): 81-148, “Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos,” in S. Mitchell and P. Van Nuffelen (eds.), *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 167-208; Michael Frede, “Monotheism and Pagan Philosophy in Later Antiquity,” in *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, 41-68, “The case for pagan monotheism in Greek and Graeco-Roman antiquity,” in *One God*, 53-81; Angelos Chaniotis, “Megatheism: the search for the almighty god and the competition of cults,” in *One God*, 112-40, in addition to his extensive bibliography in *One God*, 213-14.

Roman Empire. Paul Trebilco's and John Barclay's work on Asia Minor has again been foundational to this study.³

In this thesis, I claim that there was a trend toward monotheism in Asia Minor during the first to third centuries CE. In the following chapters I explain within a framework of assimilation theory, and by challenging assumptions about syncretism in these practices, why there was a developing trend toward monotheism. I build on the areas of pagan monotheism, Jewish religious practices and ethnic distinction, and early Christian communities, and draw them together in their common interactive cultural environment.

This study builds on a recent interest in culture, ethnicity, and the individual in ancient communities.⁴ It fits into the wider fields of cultural studies and the history of religions. It engages with the disciplines of biblical studies, classical studies and the social sciences. This study contributes to scholarship on Asia Minor by using a modern framework of assimilation theory to investigate an ancient cultural context in which monotheistic expressions of god emerged in cult and theology.

I have identified a gap in scholarship which the application of assimilation theory to minority groups in an ancient context enters. Assimilation theory is a means of explicating the processes of cultural interaction leading to religious change. The work of this thesis also enters the area of comparative analysis between a pagan theological

³ Paul Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 69 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); John Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996).

⁴ See especially the selection of essays in J. Rüpke (ed.), *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

oracle⁵ and a Christian hymn⁶ in order to investigate a common cultural background.

The evidence used here is mostly epigraphical.⁷ The epigraphical record of Asia Minor in this period is abundant. Epigraphy gives different insights into people than the insights of literature. Epigraphy provides a unique and privileged view into the world of ordinary people.⁸ Some of the distinct practices I have associated with monotheism are discerned from the epigraphical evidence.

The work of this thesis is chronologically contained from the first to the third centuries CE. In these three centuries, the evidence discussed in this study is most prominent. Beyond the third century Christianity becomes a dominant cultural force and the face of traditional pagan religion changes. Before the first century other factors, including the establishment of the Roman imperium, impacted on Asia Minor. Evidence from outside of these three centuries will be selectively used if it highlights a point or provides important extra information.⁹ This study is geographically contained to Asia Minor as it was the distinctive cultural environment of Asia Minor that produced the phenomena discussed here. Again, evidence from other areas is used only to highlight a point, or where evidence is lacking from Asia Minor.

1.1 Outline of thesis

⁵ *SEG* XXVII (1977) 933 from Oinoanda.

⁶ Kol 1.15-20.

⁷ The exception is Christian communities, for whom the epigraphical evidence is less prominent in these centuries. I rely more heavily on the biblical corpus when discussing Christians, especially in Chapter Nine.

⁸ Noting the limitations set out in Chapter Two.

⁹ Such as the Sardis synagogue referred to in Chapters Two and Four.

Several main areas are covered in this investigation of the cultural environment of Asia Minor to test if it did provide a matrix for monotheistic expressions of god. The thesis gives an evaluation of the cultural environment of Asia Minor and I argue that in this period a new religious situation conducive to monotheism and group interaction emerged. From the development of a new religious situation I engage with the areas where monotheistic practices were evident. Having established practices congruent with monotheism, I explore evidence for cultic activity associated with a highest god among Jews and pagans. I then place evidence of one highest god in the context of pagan oracles and oracle centres in Asia Minor. I link the pagan expression of god through the voice of the god in oracles to a Christian community and its textual expression of a highest god.

In each chapter, I emphasise the main areas of movement through the thesis to discern whether the cultural environment of Asia Minor provided a matrix which enabled a highest god to emerge with assimilating links between cultural groups. The chapters build up evidence and give specific examples of the evidence in context.

Chapter Two sets out the method of arguing the thesis. I outline the modern theory of assimilation and how it is applied in modern settings. I break down the modern theory into aspects, then examine scholars who have used assimilation theory in an ancient context. On this basis, I provide a version of the theory suitable for this thesis, and apply it to a case study of a Jewish community in Akmonia.

Chapter Three sets out a review of the scholarship which has been influential in progressing this argument. The review of scholarship briefly overviews the broad field of modern scholarship in Asia Minor. I then identify four main areas which contribute to this study and survey the scholarship undertaken in them. These main areas are: the cultural environment of Asia Minor, cultural change leading to a new

religious situation, the religious attitudes and practices unique to Asia Minor, and monotheism in Asia Minor.

I begin the work of building a view of the cultural environment of Asia Minor in Chapter Four. I identify in the environment the main groups of people, including indigenous, mainly rural minority groups, mainstream pagan urban groups and urban Jewish minority groups. I assess the impact of Hellenisation and Romanisation on the different groups and discover how the assimilation of groups affects this impact. I consider language usage as an indicator of assimilation in indigenous groups, and the imperial cult as representative of Roman rule in urban settings.

In Chapter Five I give attention to the religious situation as an important aspect of the cultural environment. I give a background on traditional pagan religion and its place in the structures of city and country to highlight the distinctiveness of the religious situation in Asia Minor. I then identify religious change through attitudes and practices, some of which are evident in the margins of the cultural mainstream. I find evidence of a new role of the individual person in the changing environment. I identify religious groups of the new type, and assess one response to the new religious situation in a minority group setting through the study of transgression, public confession and penance.

The presence of groups of a new type leads more directly into the area of monotheism. In Chapter Six I investigate the types of monotheism and definitions applied to pagan monotheism. I undertake an investigation of the Greek philosophical background of monotheism through two philosophers, the pre-Socratic Xenophanes (sixth century BCE) and Plato (fourth century BCE). I then analyse the relationship of philosophical monotheism with traditional pagan religion. The focus of the study then shifts from the theoretical to practical, and draws out

the practices I associate with monotheism in a new religious situation. I include more detailed study of abstract divinities and the processes of mediation in a philosophically constructed universe. The chapter concludes with a case study of the phenomenon of *angeloi* devotion in the context of a highest god at Stratonikeia as representative of pagan monotheism.

Building on the foundations of philosophical monotheism and its practical application in the cultural environment, in Chapter Seven I consider evidence of a highest god and its occurrence between pagans and Jews. I specify Theos Hypsistos as a high god of pagan monotheism, examine the relationship of Theos Hypsistos to other pagan gods and to Judaism, then identify cults of Theos Hypsistos and features distinctive to its cults. I take the *theosebeis*, the god-worshippers, as an example of the assimilating processes between Judaism and pagan monotheism and consider the relationship of the *theosebeis* to Theos Hypsistos. The chapter concludes with case studies of *theosebeis* at Miletos and Aphrodisias.

In Chapter Eight I engage the area of pagan oracles and their function in pagan religion. The interest for this thesis is the monotheistic expressions of god which certain theological oracles express. I identify in this chapter Apollo as a god of prophecy and assess the assimilation of Apollo and his cults in Asia Minor. I give an overview of the main oracle sites of Asia Minor, including the processes of oracle consultation and production, the types, interpretation and dissemination of the oracles. I identify a key text in this thesis, a theological oracle from Oinoanda, and provide a case study of the oracle as an example of pagan monotheism with linkage to a cult of Theos Hypsistos.

In Chapter Nine the study comes to the Christian expression of monotheism. In the first three centuries Christians were minority

groups, they were also monotheistic, and they represented a religious group of the new type. I identify the text of the Letter to the Kolossians from the area of the Lykos Valley as evidence of a Christian community. The Lykos Valley is geographically connected to the occurrences of pagan monotheism as described in the preceding chapters. I discuss the biblical letter and the evidence of community conflict in it, then examine the Christological hymn (Kol 1.15-20) from the letter, and interpret its meaning in the cultural context. I then draw the hymn and the theological oracle from Oinoanda into dialogue and provide a comparative analysis. I look for language and vocabulary between the texts as evidence of a highest god with origins in a common cultural background. It is from the basis of these texts that I assess if the cultural environment in which the texts were set did provide a matrix for expressions of a highest god that crossed cultural boundaries.

I conclude the study by summing up the evidence in a final chapter and naming the results of the study and which areas would benefit from further research.

1.2 Definition of terms

Defining ‘pagan’ and ‘paganism’ is necessary at the outset because of a long tradition of negative association and pejorative use.¹⁰ When Christian groups began to self-designate as ‘soldiers of Christ,’ they utilised the word ‘pagan’ to identify groups unlike themselves.¹¹ The

¹⁰ Cicero *De Domo Sua* (nulli pagani aut montani), and the *Codex Theodosios* 7.21.2 (pagani vel decuriones) refer to the Latin substantive *paganus*, *pagani* as rural dweller. By the sixth century CE it meant civilian, according to the *Codex Justinianus* 3.28 (vel paganum est peculiam vel castranse).

¹¹ According to A. D. Lee, *Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity: A Sourcebook*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 10.

term then began to be used as a label of opposition.¹² Care is required when using the term today because of past negative traditions. A satisfactory alternative to refer to groups not identified as Jewish or Christian is difficult to provide. ‘Polytheist’ is inadequate. As the work of this thesis shows, the boundary areas between tradition pagan religion and new religious expressions, was permeable. Monotheism, in its various forms, belonged to the pagans as well as Jews and Christians. Garth Fowden’s use of the terms ‘polytheist’ and ‘polytheism’ understates and limits the scope of intellectual and cultic movements in pagan groups.¹³ The term ‘Non-Christian’ is also clumsy. Non-Christians include Jews, making its referent a very large group with vast differences in religious views and practices. It also assumes a stance of Christian dominance.

In the absence of a useful alternative then, I elect to use the terms ‘pagan’ and ‘paganism,’ in this thesis to define the religions that I do not identify as Jewish or Christian. In doing this I understand the significant overlap between these groups in the wider context of the cultural environment and the day to day experience of living in that environment.¹⁴ I also elect not to capitalise the name ‘pagan.’ I do this because in the period discussed here there was no system of orthodoxy or doctrine in pagan religion.¹⁵ Throughout this study traditional

¹² Garth Fowden, “Late Polytheism,” in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. XII 2nd edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 521 says the term was invented at the end of the second century to refer to those who were not Jews or pagans and grew in use as Christianity became dominant. Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians in the Mediterranean World from the Second Century AD to the Conversion of Constantine*, (Middlesex: Viking, 1986), 30-31 says the term ‘pagan’ only came into use as late as the fourth century CE. Its earliest legal use is in the 370 CE *Codex Theodosios* 16.2.18.

¹³ See Garth Fowden’s “Late Polytheism,” 521-572; and “Polytheist Religion and Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol XIII (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 538-560, for his use of the term ‘polytheist’ and ‘polytheism.’ He also admits the clumsiness of these terms, but in *Late Polytheism*, 522 says it is: “a less nakedly offensive formulation than ‘paganism.’”

¹⁴ As Averil Cameron notes in *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, Sather Classical Lectures, Vol. 55 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 122, even naming groups as ‘Christian’ or ‘pagan’ assumes there was distinct boundaries between them, whereas there was significant overlapping.

¹⁵ Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 31.

pagan religion is presented as a set of religious practices and traditions which differed between local region and customs, not as a singular religion.

The term ‘monotheism’ is in this thesis complex and I undertake fuller discussion in Chapter Six.¹⁶

I note here the difficulty of defining early followers of Jesus Christ as ‘Christian.’ The fact that Christianity emerged from Judaism means that Jewish cultural and ethnic practices would have influenced the new groups. The processes of assimilation discussed in this study affirm that it is not possible to clearly define the groups, or distinguish the extent of Jewish influence.¹⁷ In the first few decades of the first century the expression of ‘Jewish Christianity’ is more reflective of these groups. However, a full account of this complex area extends beyond the work of this thesis.

I elect to use the term ‘Jew’ and ‘Jewish’ to describe groups and individuals who ascribed to Jewish religious belief and ethnic practices which were core distinctions of their group. Such practices and distinctions may be seen in Fig. 2.¹⁸ I also use the term ‘Christian’ and ‘Christianity’ to refer to groups which were of the new type described in this study,¹⁹ who followed the figure of Jesus of Nazareth and formed around communities I describe as *ekklesiai*.²⁰ I acknowledge there were other ways of naming these groups.²¹ I identify that

¹⁶ See Chapter Six, section 6.2.

¹⁷ Studies such as Sean Freyne, *The Jesus Movement and its Expansion: Meaning and Mission*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014) explore this area and the nuances of naming groups.

¹⁸ See Chapter Four, section 4.9.1 on Jewish ethnic distinction.

¹⁹ See Chapter Five, section 5.3 on religious groups of the new type.

²⁰ The transliteration of *ekklesiai* from the Greek ἐκκλησίαι avoids association with the modern ideas of ‘church.’ It is one way of distinguishing the newly emerging Christian groups.

²¹ As ‘Christ followers,’ ‘Jesus followers,’ ‘The Jesus Movement.’

Christians were specific groups known by the Romans. Neither were Christians known by the Romans as Jews.²²

1.3 A note on style and translation

Throughout this thesis, a preference is given to a Greek transliteration of words. As most of sources used here are Greek, and I have extensively worked from the Greek, I have avoided conventions which impose Latin transliterations of words which have Greek origins. For example, Kolossai is preferred over Colossae, Ephesos over Ephesus, Akmonia over Acmonia. Roman names and words of Latin origin are retained with Latin spellings.

I have preferred the Greek *angelos/angeloi* transliterations over ‘angel/s.’²³ This is to avoid the interpretation of the word from exclusively biblical, or later traditions.

All translations from the Greek and Latin are mine unless otherwise indicated.

In this study, I do not capitalise ‘god,’ whether I am referring to the Jewish, Christian or pagan understanding of god. No disrespect is intended to any faith tradition. I make this choice to avoid distinguishing the superiority of a Jewish, pagan or Christian highest god.

²² The ancient Latin references to Christians may be found in Pliny the Younger *Epist.* X.96 where Pliny writes to the emperor Trajan for legal advice on dealing justice to Christians; Tacitus *Annals* 15.44 on Nero’s persecution of Christians; Suetonius *Nero* 16 also on the punishment of Christians, and *Claudius* 25 on the obscure reference of ‘Chrestus.’ Reference to the distinction became apparent in the clarification by Nerva in 96 CE of the *fiscus Iudaicus* imposed on Jews by Vespasian following the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE. For more see for example, Robert E. Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000).

²³ As Rangar Cline, *Ancient Angels: Conceptualising Angeloi in the Roman Empire*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), xv.

No feminised versions of words are used throughout this study. Words such ‘priest’ is used over ‘priestess,’ ‘god’ over ‘goddess.’ This choice is based on an intention to equalise the perception of roles between genders, rather than provide a diminutive to the feminine. When referring to gender where distinction is required, I provide a qualification indicating male and female. For example, in translating θεοῖς καὶ θεαῖς, I give ‘to the male and female gods.’

With this summarising introduction, I now lead into the following chapters, which expand the reasoning of the thesis question.

1.4 Map of sites

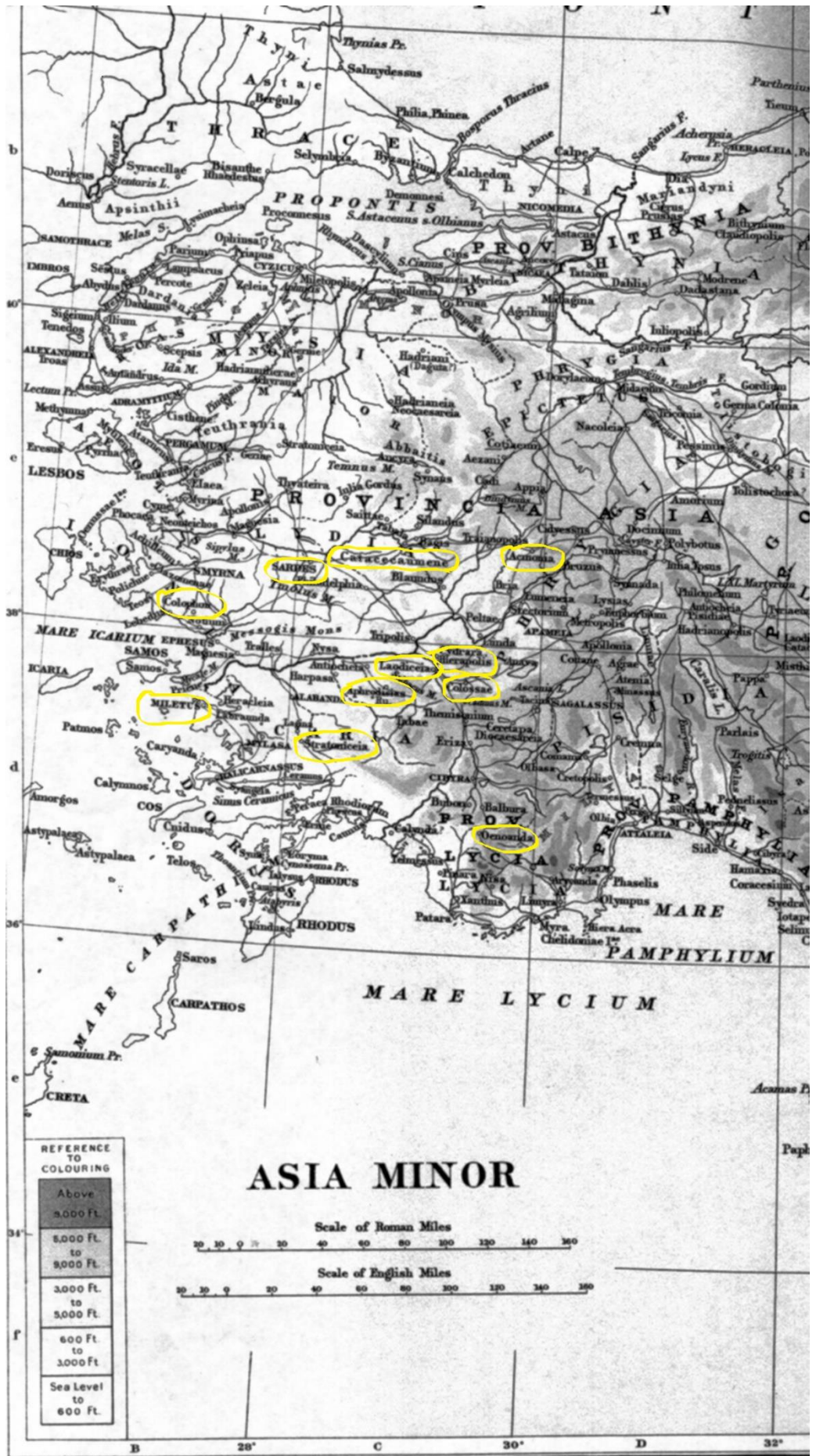
The following map (Map 1) provides the reader with information on the geographical location of sites referred to in this thesis.²⁴ I have highlighted the following sites: the Katakekaumene area, which is rich in evidence for confession texts;²⁵ Sardis, a significant Jewish centre; Akmonia, which supported a Jewish community I use as a case study in Chapter Two; Kolophon and Miletos, where the important oracle centres of Klaros and Didyma are located; Stratonikeia, from which a cluster of *angeloi* inscriptions are found;²⁶ Oinoanda, the site of the theological oracle discussed in this study; Aphrodisias, where evidence of *theosebeis* is found; and the cities of the Lykos Valley, Kolossai, Hierapolis and Laodikeia.²⁷

²⁴ Map from *Handbook for travellers in Turkey in Asia: including Constantinople, the Bosphorus, plain of Troy, isles of Cyprus, Rhodes, &c., Smyrna, Ephesus, and the routes to Persia, Bagdad, Moosool, &c.: with general hints for travellers in Turkey, vocabularies &c.* John Murray (Firm): 1917

²⁵ Discussed in Chapter Five.

²⁶ See Chapter Seven.

²⁷ I discuss the Christian community in the Lykos Valley in Chapter Nine.



2. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I use the tool of assimilation theory to expound the thesis question: does the cultural environment of Asia Minor provide a matrix for expressions of a highest god? Is it in minority cultural group settings, beyond the mainstream, that these expressions are most prominent? The two ideas of the cultural environment as an enabling matrix, and the emergence of expressions of a highest god among minority groups are key to this thesis.

In the following pages, I set out assimilation theory as a viable method to interrogate the thesis question. I will first describe the theory in its modern application and set out terms of the theory. I will then survey scholars who have successfully applied a version of assimilation theory to the ancient context, then set up the parameters and limitations for the ancient context. I then provide a version of assimilation theory applicable to this study giving measurable points to assess the theory. I present the situations in which the theory may provide insights and apply the theory to a case study.

The purpose of applying this methodology is to study the cultural environment of Asia Minor from the perspective of its people and the groups the people belonged to. I access the primary evidence through archaeology and inscriptions as well as literature. Working through the processes of assimilation theory exposes the interactions between the different groups within the cultural environment. Assimilation theory identifies where convergence between cultural groups occurred, and where introversion happened.

Assimilation theory is an inductive approach, which means it begins with evidence and moves toward conclusions based on the results of

careful analysis of available evidence.¹ It may be applied methodologically, with care and caution, to the ancient context. The parameters and limitations of assimilation theory in the ancient context indicate that care and caution is required in using the theory. I discuss the parameters and limitations of assimilation theory in an ancient context in this chapter.

2.1 Assimilation theory: the modern method

In the modern context assimilation, or integration, theory is used to observe the processes that happen when migrant groups encounter a culturally different mainstream society. Assimilation as a social scientific term means the processes that occur when different cultural groups or societies are exposed to each other, leading to a reduction in distinctive social and cultural differences.² Assimilation is the result of people responding to and adapting to changing conditions in which they find themselves.³ It can be applied to an ancient culture because changing conditions to which people must adapt is a human experience not confined to any one time or to the modern definitions of immigrant or refugee.

Contemporary assimilation theory relies on extensive empirical data and inductive methods of dealing with data. This approach takes in a broad range of sources and is not reliant on traditional scholarship in the area. Like every field, assimilation theory is dynamic and

¹ As opposed to a deductive approach, which takes what is already known or presumed and draws conclusions from what is known, working the evidence to fit the theory.

² Richard D. Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 10, and J. Milton Yinger, "Toward a theory of assimilation and dissimilation," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4, (1981): 249, supply this interpretation of assimilation theory.

³ Such adaptation does not just happen to migrants. It also happens when people experience changed life situations. This may include changes like becoming a parent, becoming financially destitute, having a serious illness, or moving into a nursing home.

challenges past models for inaccurately representing the reality for immigrants and their children.

In the modern use of the theory, assimilation can be complete or variable.⁴ Complete assimilation is where distinguishable cultural groups become blended into one. Variable assimilation describes assimilation as it happens in various degrees in various aspects.⁵ The extent to which the subprocesses of assimilation occur is caused by variability in assimilation processes. Variable assimilation is what is most commonly witnessed in the immigration of ethnic groups today.

The subprocesses involved in assimilation include: acculturation, integration, identification, amalgamation and dissimilation. The subprocesses work to varying degrees and influence the overall extent of assimilation.

In the following pages, I describe the subprocesses of assimilation as they occur in the modern application of assimilation theory. I will then survey modern scholars who have successfully applied assimilation theory in the ancient context before providing a model of assimilation theory to suit this present study.

2.1.1 Acculturation

Acculturation, which is also known as cultural assimilation, happens when differing cultural groups come into regular contact with each other. This results in the changing cultural patterns of the groups. Constant saturation of cultural practices and traits, or selective adoption of cultural practices and traits, results in acculturation.

⁴ Yinger, "Toward a theory of assimilation and dissimilation," 249. On complete assimilation Yinger refers to studies by E. K. Francis, *Interethnic Relations: An Essay in Sociological Theory*, (New York: Elsevier, 1976, chapter 20), and G. E. Simpson, "Assimilation," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* Vol 1, (New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, 1968), 438-444.

⁵ Yinger, "Toward a theory of assimilation and dissimilation," 249.

Acculturation often occurs automatically as people adjust to their surroundings.

Groups of people new to a society seek wider social connections when their own group cannot meet their needs or interests, exposing them to the effects of acculturation.⁶ Children of immigrants will look beyond their own group for social support more readily than their parents and grandparents. The things that are valued most among their own group determine which cultural elements groups and individuals assimilate and reject. Transformation of the cultural elements assimilated happens in this process.

Mutual acculturation is a two-way process. It happens as groups take up cultural practices that are different from their own. Differences in size and power of groups determines the strength of mutual acculturation.⁷ So smaller groups are more likely to be acculturated by larger and the level of mutual acculturation is less.

Graydon Snyder makes use of the term ‘inculturation’ to refer to the extent to which a minority group, such as Judaism or Christianity, influences and alters a dominant culture.⁸ In this interpretation the minority group takes the cultural elements of the mainstream and creates a new culture. The new culture expresses the intent of the minority group. In modern usage inculturation can refer to the way Christianity expresses itself to non-Christian cultures, and the way the non-Christian cultures influence and shape the Christian teaching to suit the culture.

⁶ Herbert J. Gans, “Acculturation, assimilation and mobility,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30/1 (2007): 154.

⁷ The adoption of Indian food in England, and its place as a favourite take away is a contemporary example of acculturation of the mainstream by a smaller group.

⁸ Graydon F. Snyder, “The Interaction of Jews with Non-Jews in Rome,” in *Judaism and Christianity in First Century Rome*, edited by Karl P. Donfried and Peter Richardson, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 69, 72-4.

Snyder also uses 'enculturation' to refer to the formation and enculturation of people into a new system.⁹

Full acculturation happens when members of cultural groups can no longer be distinguished by culture.¹⁰ It is a powerful part of the processes of assimilation. Full acculturation does not mean that assimilation is complete, as acculturation is only one aspect of the assimilating processes.

In acculturation processes, the components of a dominant culture are transferred with various speed and ease to smaller cultural groups. Elements of acculturation involve dress, language, decorative symbols, food, entertainment. These things do not necessarily affect the cultural or ethnic distinction of a minority group. The values of a new society are taken up more slowly by minority groups than other things, even as material culture is shared.¹¹ The perceived place in a group to which a person may advance influences which values are adopted or rejected.

Substitutive and additive elements can be distinguished within acculturation processes.¹² Substitutive acculturation is where some elements of culture are replaced with new ones. Additive acculturation is where some elements of culture are added into the corpus of cultural practices, creating a more complex cultural base. In terms of religion, substitutive acculturation involves conversion, while additive acculturation involves adding new religious elements to a traditionally practiced religion.

Acculturation involves people at a personal relationship level. It is to be distinguished from structural assimilation processes, in which

⁹ Snyder, "The Interaction of Jews with Non-Jews in Rome," 71.

¹⁰ Yinger, "Toward a theory of assimilation and aissimilation," 251.

¹¹ Yinger, "Toward a theory of assimilation and dissimilation," 251.

¹² Yinger, "Toward a theory of assimilation and dissimilation," 252.

people engage with the social, economic, political and legal institutions of a society.

Acculturation happens as people and groups become involved in personal social network associations. This can include neighbourhoods, clubs and associations.¹³ People may be members of multiple groups. Associations related to occupations have a high level of acculturation, most likely because of the time people at work spend with each other. People then as now become friends at work and form relationships that continue after a working day, including marriage.

The time a group has been living in an area affects the extent of acculturation. The results of modern assimilation theory shows that the more recent a group's entry into the society, the more resistance there is to assimilation.¹⁴ On the other hand, the longer a group has been exposed to a society, the more likely it is to be thoroughly assimilated.¹⁵ This means that the children and grandchildren of immigrants will be more assimilated than the first generation.

Intentional acculturation involves a new person intentionally creating the means of becoming integrated in the wider society, mostly for economic purposes. Acculturation which occurs through the saturation

¹³ My parents were immigrants to South Australia from England in the 1960s. They lived in Elizabeth Downs, to the north of Adelaide, among a mixed group of other English immigrants and Australians from low socio-economic backgrounds who were housed in public housing units. The immigrant group soon formed their own club, the Northern Districts Residents Association, first in a temporary nissan hut, then in a brick built hall. The NDRA disbanded after some years as the immigrants became more connected socially to the wider community. Eventually the brick hall was used for other purposes until it was taken down some forty years later.

¹⁴ Martin N. Marger, *Race and Ethnic Relations: America and Global Perspectives*, 2nd edition, (Belmont, Calif: Wadsworth, 1991), 127, cited in Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 199.

¹⁵ Lee Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?*, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 26 refers to the importance of noting chronology in assessing the degree of Hellenisation, and that the longer a Jewish community was exposed to Hellenistic-Roman influence, the greater the mainstream influence.

of a new culture is unlike intentional acculturation, which is deliberate.

In summary, acculturation in the modern context refers to members of minority groups taking up cultural customs and practices of the mainstream culture. Acculturation may be mutual and minority groups and the cultural mainstream enrich each other through sharing. In addition to cultural practices, acculturation may involve the transference of the values of a mainstream to a minority group. Full acculturation does not mean a group is assimilated. Acculturation is a transformational process of assimilation.

2.1.2 Integration

Integration is a process of structural assimilation. It involves persons from two or more cultural subgroups sharing interactions. These interactions can happen impersonally with economic and political institutions, and personally through friendships, neighbourhoods and marriage.¹⁶ Integration is not a psychological or biological process, although each interacts with the other and affects the overall variability of assimilation. Integration is the preferred term for assimilation in modern studies in Europe and England (over ‘assimilation’ more broadly, which is current in the United States).¹⁷ It gives more prominence to the structural components of incorporation into a society than to the cultural components.

There are group and individual aspects of integration. At an individual level integration means that persons from two or more cultural groups

¹⁶ Yinger, “Toward a theory of assimilation and dissimilation,” 254.

¹⁷ Jens Schneider and Maurice Crul, “New insights into assimilation and integration theory: Introduction to the special issue,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33 (no. 7, 2010): 1144. Assimilation in the American context refers to immigrants becoming ‘similar’ to the wider culture. This means becoming similar to what is considered mainstream. What defines ‘mainstream’ here is not given, and is likely to incorporate a wide range of diversity.

can be part of the same social groups and interact equally. Group integration means that two or more cultural groups have the same rights and public privileges, same access to economic and political advantages and share the same civic responsibilities as the wider society.¹⁸ As this process continues, there is equal access to the power and privilege associated with the various elements of public participation. The cultural groups are also recognised as distinctive within that society. Group integration does not imply the dissolution of interaction within personal networks and separate groups. Assimilation at this level cannot happen without the new cultural group being formally or informally accepted by the cultural groups already in place, and to which they may seek to be a part.¹⁹

2.1.3 Identification

Identification is a psychological subprocess of assimilation. Identification happens when people from separate groups come to think of themselves as belonging to the same society. This society is new, and is formed out of the societies of origin. Within the processes of identification people are assigned to insider and outsider groups.²⁰

The identification of a person with two cultural groups can lead to marginalisation of the person in relation to both groups. The experience of partial acculturation, integration and amalgamation causes the state of marginalisation of a person to more than one group. This is the experience of some indigenous people around the world today.²¹

¹⁸ Yinger, "Toward a theory of assimilation and dissimulation," 254.

¹⁹ Gans, "Acculturation, assimilation and mobility," 153.

²⁰ Yinger, "Toward a theory of assimilation and dissimulation," 253.

²¹ As Australian Aboriginal People.

2.1.4 Amalgamation

Amalgamation is a biological process which is observed through intermarriage and gradually changing appearances. It is particularly noticeable in couples with markedly different skin colour from each other and their children. If amalgamation has happened, or is in the process of happening, the other processes of assimilation are more likely.

Groups which are biologically distinct, which have not amalgamated and which can be identified by others by appearance or genealogy as distinct, are less likely to be affected by the psychological (identification), cultural (acculturation) or structural (integration) assimilation subprocesses.²²

2.1.5 Dissimilation

The process of dissimilation is the opposite of assimilation. In this process differences between cultural groups are maintained and created. The renewal of certain groups is evidence of this process. Dissimilation is not necessarily a negative process. It is proactive, intended to elevate as unique the valued qualities of a cultural group. Some Australian Aboriginal People recover and preserve traditional cultural practices, including language, art and dance, by dissimilating from mainstream culture.

The establishment of geographically defined ethnic enclaves are another example of dissimilation.²³ A minority group bound tightly by ethnicity preserves cultural and ethnic distinctions by becoming introverted in an ethnic enclave. Modern examples may be found in sections of certain cities in which migrants or refugees first settle.

²² Yinger, "Toward a theory of assimilation and dissimilation," 255.

²³ Gans, "Acculturation, assimilation and mobility," 160.

They are usually small and clearly recognisable.²⁴ Residence and employment for members of the same ethnic background identify the enclave. Shops sell products imported from the country of origin.²⁵ The language spoken is the also from the country of origin, along with dress style and other cultural practices. Another type of enclave is a ghetto. Sometimes a ghetto has negative connotations of economic and social poverty. Members may become socially isolated from the cultural mainstream and restricted in employment and social networking to their own group.

2.2 Measurements of the extent of assimilation of minority cultural groups

In modern contexts, the categories of ‘success’ measure the extent of assimilation of migrant and ethnic groups. Markers of economic and social success determine assimilation into the mainstream culture.²⁶ Success may be defined in modern terms by signs of economic means, social inclusion and activity, access to and achievement in educational institutions, political power and overall equality in society. Just as much as social and economic success of ethnic groups can be used as a measure of assimilation in the modern context, so the success of groups that resist assimilation must also be considered.

In western countries where immigrants are in the process of assimilating, ‘mobility’ is a measurement of success, for either better or worse. Gans defines economic mobility as movement into higher or lower levels of wealth, education, employment status and standard of living; social mobility as the movement to a higher or lower class or

²⁴ An example is found in many modern cities which have a ‘China Town’ in which food and businesses expressing Chinese culture are found.

²⁵ Gans, “Acculturation, assimilation and mobility,” 160 says that successful ethnic enterprises must stay in the ethnically defined area in order to remain successful.

²⁶ What amounts to mainstream is highly flexible and incorporates a lot of cultural diversity in the modern world.

status position.²⁷ It is not always clear whether success is a result of assimilation or if assimilation results from success.²⁸ Assimilation can lead to a decline in economic success. This happens when assimilation relies on the ability of a person to attain employment.²⁹

Mobility may encourage acculturation and lead to assimilation. The process is two-way. Immigrants may choose to acculturate and assimilate into a certain social status and lifestyle that is mostly lived by non-immigrants. As people take on higher levels of employment there are obligations to participate in certain customs which lead to a degree of assimilation, at least in the workplace.

Admission into social groups that are 'closed,' that is, they require screening before admission, can lead to social mobility.³⁰ A modern example of a closed social group in which mobility can occur is the Freemason society. This social group requires tight screening prior to admission, and women may only be auxiliary members.

Modern definitions of success, based on social and economic mobility, access to and representations in the structures of education, equal access to employment opportunities, are restricted by gender, rank and social status in the ancient world. Factors which assist mobility in the modern context, such as training for new employment positions with a view to gaining social and economic success, have limited relevance when applied to people born into a family heritage defined by a certain trade, and where movement through the social structure was difficult.

²⁷ Gans, "Acculturation, assimilation and mobility," 154.

²⁸ Gans, "Acculturation, assimilation and mobility," 152-164. Gans' intention in this paper is to separate mobility from assimilation, and to identify which factors contribute to upward or downward movement on the scale of economic and social success, and whether this movement is the cause or result of assimilation.

²⁹ The examples in western countries of overqualified immigrants or refugees taking up employment well below their abilities are abundant. The reason is usually based in refusal of the host country to accept qualification from other countries, or the limitations imposed by visas.

³⁰ Gans, "Acculturation, assimilation and mobility," 155.

Success can be measured in the ancient context by representation of minority group members in mainstream civic roles, in trade and business, in socio-religious associations, and in positions of political influence. The mobility of individuals from minority groups and the mobility of whole groups, may be traced through the evidence to create a picture of their overall place in the cultural environment.

Indicators of success may be used to measure assimilation in the ancient world, but with awareness of the more rigid rank and social status structure which limited the mobility of certain groups of people. People of lower rank and status in the ancient world did not move as easily through the structures of society as might be possible for people of lower socio-economic backgrounds to move today. Gender also imposed limitations on the success and mobility of individuals. Women did not move as freely in society as men, especially if they belonged to families of lower social rank.

There is also an uneven availability of evidence based on the means of people to leave memorials of their success.

Modern definitions of success do not necessarily equate to the experience of ancient groups. Overall equality in society, which is a measure of the extent of success of minority groups in the modern context, is not a relevant marker of success in the ancient context. Equality in society is a modern western notion. In the ancient world, there were status divisions and gender bias toward males. I acknowledge that critique of the structures of ancient society and the dominant role of males, which limited the success of people of lower social position and of women, is a modern perspective. It nonetheless means that evidence for the success of women and lower social groups is less prominent.

2.3 The parameters of use and the limitations of assimilation theory in the ancient context

Assimilation theory is a modern social science method designed for the study of migrant and ethnic groups encountering a mainstream culture different from their own. Assimilation theory looks for the adaptation of people to their environment. It works well in the context of Asia Minor because of the presence of many different cultural groups adapting to the common mainstream culture. However, there are limits to its usefulness in the ancient context. In this section,³ I outline parameters of use and the limitations of assimilation theory as it applies to the thesis question.

I apply this method chronologically to the beginning of the first to the end of the third centuries CE. This is also known as the Roman imperial period in Asia Minor.³¹ Evidence from outside of these centuries will be used only if it further elucidates an issue being discussed.

The geographical parameters of this study are contained to Asia Minor. Most evidence used in explicating this method is from western and southern Asia Minor, incorporating Phrygia, Lydia, Mysia, Karia, Lykia, and Pisidia. Outside of this geographical area other factors, such as the proximity of the Roman imperium, the uprising of groups, and influence of other non-mainstream cultural groups affected the social, political, economic, intellectual, and religious environment. Again, examples will be used from beyond the geographical parameters which give extra information and highlight an issue.

The availability of evidence limits the use of assimilation theory in an ancient context.³² Most evidence from ancient context is likely to

³¹ The Roman imperial period began with Augustus in 27 BCE and ended with the reforms of Diocletian in 284 CE.

³² This is an issue for studies of the ancient world involving archaeology across multiple fields.

represent people of some economic means. By contrast, modern empirical evidence of assimilation practices drawn from immigration studies in developed western countries reflects data from a wide range of people from different cultural and ethnic groups with varying degrees of economic means. There is therefore, a significant base difference in using assimilation theory in modern compared to ancient contexts. Lack of available evidence from the ancient world, especially from all cultural groups, gender, rank and status may mean that it is not possible to draw conclusions about assimilation and acculturation for all groups of people.

Only those with a certain amount of material wealth left memorials or had inscriptions carved about their achievements.³³ Literature also reflects people of wealth and learning, those born into a lifestyle of privilege. Writing was expensive and the access to education for all groups of women was limited. The time and opportunity to learn to read and write was not available to all people.

Related to material wealth is the social structure of the ancient world. This distinction from the modern context limits the inclusive use of assimilation theory as a method. Rank and status in society usually determined wealth availability. As most of the population were of limited wealth, there is a lack of material evidence for many people. Slaves were unlikely to have memorials made on their behalf.³⁴ Neither were people in lower socio-economic positions as likely to have memorials or leave behind an abundance of material evidence of their lives and practices.

Status designation was a factor in how the processes of assimilation occurred. Wealthier groups could afford to travel, and through travel

³³ See discussion in Rick Strelan, "The Languages of the Lycus Valley," in A. H. Cadwallader and M. Trainor, (eds.), *Colossae in Space and Time: Linking to an Ancient City*, (Göttingen/Oakville CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 80-1.

³⁴ The exception of imperial slaves is discussed in Chapter Five.

be exposed to and acquire tastes and fashions, and accumulate material goods.³⁵ These people also had the capacity to build, be benefactors of building, have elaborate tombstones and commission inscriptions. Status was linked to family. The family network one was born into usually determined the social standing of a person for life. However, there are occasional exceptions to the limitations set out in this section.

Gender was another restricting factor in this period. Examples like Julia Severa from Akmonia who funded the building of the synagogue in the first century BCE,³⁶ and Kapetolina from Tralles who funded building works in the synagogue,³⁷ were a wealthy minority. Marriage and family membership affected the capacity of women to leave memorials of their achievements. Although many women were named in epigraphic memorials, at the same time, the names of many were not inscribed, particularly if they were without the economic means afforded by the social status into which they were born.

In this study, the methodology of assimilation theory applied to cultural groups works in a fixed time frame and geographical location. I apply the methodology with awareness that evidence is mostly of people with some degree of material wealth, and of a rank, status and occupation that enabled material culture to be left behind. The evidence available from inscriptions provides the most useful information about assimilation, noting the parameters and limitations

³⁵ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 24.

³⁶ *MAMA* VI 264; *IJO* 168; *IGR* 4, 655.

³⁷ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 157; *CIG* 2924.

set out above.³⁸ Evidence is shown through inscriptions of occupations, social practices and social involvements.³⁹

2.4 Modern scholarship using assimilation theory in the ancient context

In this section, I survey modern scholars who have used assimilation theory in ancient contexts. These scholars have modified the theory to suit their area of study. I have identified two scholars who have used assimilation theory on ancient cultural groups. These are John Barclay⁴⁰ and Philip Harland.⁴¹ I also mention Lee Levine, who applies the theory without the precise terminology.⁴² The most studies using assimilation theory-related methods in the ancient context involve Jewish groups. Jews were minority groups outside of Palestine. The evidence of dispersed Judaism lends itself to assimilation theory as a method of study because of the clear ethnic distinctions Jews displayed within the Hellenistic cultural mainstream.

John Barclay's study of Jews in the context of a Hellenised cultural mainstream has been the most influential work using a modified assimilation theory to suit the ancient world.⁴³ Barclay's study is concerned with dispersed Jews in Egypt, Cyrenaica, Syria, Rome and Asia. The scope of the work is between 323 BCE to 117 CE.⁴⁴

Assessment of assimilation of Jews in these areas makes up only one aspect of Barclay's study. Of great importance is Barclay's desire to

³⁸ A. J. Bij de Vaate and J. W. van Henten, "Jewish or Non-Jewish? Some Remarks on the Identification of Jewish Inscriptions from Asia Minor," in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 53 (1996): 17 cautions readers about the limitations of relying on non-literary data, especially identifying the origin of an inscriptions due to lack of data connecting a text to a location, time or group. It is noted that many inscriptions studied in this thesis are removed from their provenance.

³⁹ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 99.

⁴⁰ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*.

⁴¹ Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

⁴² Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*.

⁴³ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*.

⁴⁴ Thus, the subtitle of the book, "From Alexander to Trajan."

ensure: “respect and tolerance for minority ethnic groups, in the face of the complex problems created by modern social pluralism.”⁴⁵ With this attitude he deals respectfully with the fact that the ethnic distinction of Jews throughout history has led to marginalisation and stereotypical characterisation. In this study, he affirms that Jews provide a case for the ongoing endurance of a minority group in a wider context.

Barclay establishes that engagement of Jews with Hellenistic culture was measurable by kinds and degrees.⁴⁶ Kinds of engagement, such as the intellectual pursuits of Hellenism, caused less issue among Jewish communities than the failure to circumcise.⁴⁷ In his method, he looks for degrees of Hellenisation to assess levels of assimilation, acculturation and accommodation. This new category of accommodation refers to how acculturation is used. Barclay uses scales ranging from high to low in his assessment.

Barclay distinguishes the categories of assimilation from acculturation, noting that there is no consensus in the use of language around these.⁴⁸ In his study assimilation is congruent with social integration. This includes the social aspects of contact and interaction in a social setting, and social practices. It is to be distinguished from acculturation, which refers to the linguistic, educational and ideological aspects of culture. The two are related. Acculturation may lead to assimilation. For an ethnic minority, assimilation is a greater risk to loss of identity and distinction than acculturation. Barclay writes: “A minority group is far more threatened by assimilation than acculturation, since the former subverts the basis of its existence.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 14.

⁴⁶ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 90.

⁴⁷ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 91.

⁴⁸ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 92 and note 20.

⁴⁹ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 92.

Barclay assesses assimilation by measuring the degree to which Jews were integrated into, or stood apart from, the social interactions of the mainstream culture.⁵⁰ The scale of assimilation ranges from abandonment of key Jewish social distinctions at one end to social life confined to the Jewish community at the other end. In between are gymnasium education, attendance at theatre and athletic events, and commercial employment with non-Jews.

The assessment of acculturation is given another scale. Barclay narrowly defines acculturation by language and education on the scale, ranging from familiarity with Greek literature, rhetoric, philosophy and theology at one end, to no facility in Greek at the other end.⁵¹ Acquaintance with common moral values is in the middle.

The third category Barclay uses is accommodation. Barclay describes accommodation as the use of acculturation, how Jewish and Hellenistic cultural traditions were merged or polarised.⁵² He applies accommodation to another scale. An example of accommodation is the degree to which a Jew educated in Hellenistic traditions uses the education – either to uphold Judaism, to reinterpret Judaism, or to attack Judaism. The same education may be used either for or against Hellenism.

Having established the three categories of assimilation, acculturation and accommodation and developed scales to establish the kinds, Barclay then assigns levels of assimilation ranging from high to low to these.⁵³ He also adds the category of “unknown assimilation.” This recognises that some evidence does not fit the parameters of the theory. One group he places in the unknown category of assimilation is the “syncretistic worshippers of God ‘Hypsistos.’”⁵⁴ My study in the

⁵⁰ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 93.

⁵¹ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 95.

⁵² Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 96-7.

⁵³ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 99-100.

⁵⁴ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 333.

following chapters will present this group not as of unknown assimilation, but as being a distinct minority group emerging from the cultural mainstream with assimilating edges into Judaism.⁵⁵

Barclay's model of assimilation theory differs from modern assimilation theory in the use of categories and assignation of quantitative levels. Modern assimilation theory makes use of the term 'variability' rather than levels of high and low. Using variability as a term of assimilation recognises that assimilation happens at different rates in the different subprocesses. Variability is easier to measure when there is sufficient evidence such as is found in modern data. In the ancient context, there is significant lack of data, and where there is data it is unevenly spread and limited by the restrictions noted above. Barclay's levels of assimilation from high to low are one way he has adapted the theory to suit the ancient context.

Philip Harland is another scholar who has made use of a version of assimilation theory in his study of ancient Mediterranean cultural groups.⁵⁶ In his chapter on comparing socio-religious groups Harland draws on insights of modern social science and anthropology to establish that groups were more likely integrated rather than separated in social relationships.⁵⁷ His study attempts to dispel a traditional scholarly emphasis on the sectarian activities of Jewish groups based around a synagogue, and Christian groups as they appear from biblical texts. His results suggest positive interaction:

“Insights from the social sciences regarding the complex processes of acculturation and assimilation among minority cultural groups, rather than sectarianism, may suggest more fruitful approaches to such issues of group-society relations.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ See Chapter Seven on the worshippers of Theos Hypsistos.

⁵⁶ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*.

⁵⁷ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 177.

⁵⁸ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 178.

Harland does not only consider Jews in his study, as Barclay. Harland includes pagan associations and Christian assemblies, as well as Jewish synagogues. This is helpful for my study, which includes these three groups.

In his assessment of assimilation, Harland notes the subprocesses of cultural assimilation, which he calls acculturation, and structural assimilation.⁵⁹ Structural assimilation in modern studies is also referred to as integration. Harland presents acculturation as the selection, adoption and adaptation of the cultural aspects of language, dress, religion, beliefs, and values of a cultural group. He puts less emphasis on Greek education than Barclay. He names acculturation as selective and transformative. By this he means that some cultural aspects were taken up from the mainstream by minority groups whilst others were rejected, and that selected aspects may be transformed.⁶⁰ Harland builds on Yinger's use of substitutive and additive acculturation in a modern context.⁶¹ Harland's point is that substitutive and additive acculturation enable individual and group identity to be maintained. Harland also notes practices of dissimilation.

Harland presents structural assimilation as a primary or secondary process.⁶² The primary process is found in the formal structures of society, such as gymnasium education. The secondary process is found in the informal levels of integration, such as workplace social groups.

Harland considers acculturation and structural assimilation processes in the ancient context working in the interactions between diverse synagogues, congregations and the cultural mainstream.⁶³ He acknowledges that Christian groups were not ethnically based like

⁵⁹ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 196.

⁶⁰ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 196.

⁶¹ Yinger, "Towards a theory of assimilation and dissimilation," 252.

⁶² Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 196-7.

⁶³ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 197.

Jewish groups. He agrees that assimilation can still be applied to Christian groups. He suggests that Christians were minority groups, and that they had: “a *distinctive cultural complex* (a specific configuration of various social and cultural factors, traits, values, and practices).”⁶⁴ Some of this was related to the derivation of Christianity from Judaism. Some aspects of Jewish ethnic identification were shared with Christians.

It is these shared ethnic based distinctions that enable Harland to use insights from acculturation particularly as a means of studying group relations with wider society.⁶⁵ Like Snyder,⁶⁶ Harland uses the term ‘enculturation’ to refer to the selective process of a new group member taking on, rejecting or adapting cultural elements. Harland’s use of assimilation theory allows him to propose that there was a degree of agreement in values and practices between members of different cultural groups and those of the mainstream.⁶⁷

In another study, Harland connects acculturation and identity within a Jewish minority cultural group.⁶⁸ Harland’s idea of identity is developed from social-psychological studies of social identity from a person’s perception of the self as a member of a group, and from anthropological studies of ethnic identity.⁶⁹ In this study Harland uses the evidence of epitaphs from the well-preserved necropolis of Hierapolis in Asia Minor to assess the complex cultural identities and

⁶⁴ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 197. Emphasis Harland’s.

⁶⁵ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 198.

⁶⁶ Snyder, “The Interaction of Jews with Non-Jews in Rome,” 71.

⁶⁷ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 199.

⁶⁸ Philip A. Harland, “Acculturation and Identity in the Diaspora: A Jewish Family and ‘Pagan’ Guilds at Hierapolis,” *JJS* 57/2 (2006): 222-44. On the value of the identity of groups, I later propose that assimilation theory would work well alongside social identity theory. Social identity theory is newly developing in studies of the ancient world, particularly biblical studies.

⁶⁹ Harland, “Acculturation and Identity,” 223 n. 5.

interactions between Jews in an urban environment with a Hellenistic cultural mainstream.⁷⁰

Harland evaluates the acculturating practices of the Jews of Hierapolis through the evidence of burial practices. He demonstrates acculturation and structural assimilation (integration) in the study. Harland explains these terms as he did in his previous work.⁷¹ He claims that the form and content of the Jewish epitaphs at Hierapolis reflect both acculturation and structural assimilation.⁷² The similarity of the form of the inscriptions to other non-Jewish graves is noted.⁷³ A more formal integration is also evident in the inscriptions to other civic structures. These structures include the treasury, which was an institution integral to the city.⁷⁴ The archives were another structural component of the city. Ten of the eighteen Jewish epitaphs from Hierapolis required a copy of the epitaph to be placed in the city archives.⁷⁵ These connections imply a civic responsibility for the maintenance of graves, including those of minority groups such as Jews. It also shows that Jewish people were formally accepted as part of the culturally diverse makeup of Hierapolis.

Harland's adaptation of modern assimilation theory to suit the ancient context makes use of the terms acculturation, structural assimilation and dissimilation. His model does not establish levels of high and low to measure assimilation, as does Barclay's approach. Harland uses assimilation categories to break down traditionally held views of sectarianism between Jewish and Christian groups. This enables him

⁷⁰ Harland, "Acculturation and Identity," 224. Jewish burials are mostly located in the northern necropolis dating from the middle of the second to third centuries CE. They may be found in *IHierapMir* 1-21 (Elena Miranda, "La comunità giudaica di Hierapolis di Frigia," *EA* 31 (1999): 109-55 = *SEG* 49 (1999): 1814-36.

⁷¹ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 195-200.

⁷² Harland, "Acculturation and Identity," 240.

⁷³ This is also evident in Jewish graves from Akmonia.

⁷⁴ The imposition of fines payable to the treasury for tomb violators confirms this connection. Harland, "Acculturation and Identity," 224 n. 11; *IHierapMir* 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10a, 18, 19, 21.

⁷⁵ Harland, "Acculturation and Identity," 240-1.

to present a more complex view of group relationships and social interactions.

Lee Levine uses of a method of study which is similar to the framework of assimilation theory, but without assimilation terminology.⁷⁶ His study is of Jewish groups set within a Hellenistic context. His approach in studying Judaism within the Hellenistic cultural mainstream reflects the theory behind assimilation. A minority group thrives when it adapts to mainstream culture through assimilation. Assimilation does not mean that minority groups disappeared, which Levine shows clearly through his study of the ongoing survival of Jewish people as ethnically distinctive groups. He writes: “Jews have not only become integrated into the wider society, but they have also brought many elements of the outside world into their homes, organizations, schools, and synagogues.”⁷⁷ This statement reflects the effects of mutual acculturation. Jews contributed to society by taking employment and civic roles beyond their own cultural groups.⁷⁸ They also drew cultural practices learned from the wider environment, such as art and architecture, into their own groups from that society.

Levine also maintains that the outside influences did not affect the core religious distinction that identified them as Jews. He uses the example of architecture, decorative symbols, and other material culture to express his understanding of the adaptability and cultural resilience of Jewish people. Levine distinguishes the material from the religious aspects of Jewish culture.⁷⁹ His understanding affirms that Jewish acculturation of mainstream influences such as art and architecture, did not compromise the religious identity of Jews.

⁷⁶ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*.

⁷⁷ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 3.

⁷⁸ See the case study below on the Jewish community in Akmonia for examples of Jews in important civic positions.

⁷⁹ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 23.

The processes of Hellenisation are described by Levine in terms that are congruent with assimilation theory.⁸⁰ Whilst not naming assimilation as the process, Levine refers to the “heavy impact” of substantial aspects of Hellenistic culture being absorbed into Jewish society resulting in syncretism.⁸¹ Barclay calls this “high assimilation.” Levine’s description of Jewish efforts to assert values and interests against any mainstream conformity is the same as dissimulation.⁸²

Levine does use the term ‘assimilation’ in his assessment of the difference between Hellenisation and assimilation. In his understanding assimilation means the loss of Jewish national or religious identity.⁸³ In a modern assimilation theory model this would be complete assimilation. As has been previously said, complete assimilation is rare in antiquity. It was only in much later centuries than those studied here that many Jewish communities disappeared. Complete assimilation may have caused the disappearance of some Jewish communities.

The exception to this in the period studied here is Jewish slaves. These were numerous in the wake of the Jewish revolts against Rome. Jewish slaves were isolated either as family groups or individuals and would have had limited control over participation in Jewish cultural customs, being subject to the pagan traditions of the household in which they were placed. These customs included honouring of the household *lares familiares* and the daily *salutatio*.⁸⁴ To what extent Jews who became freedpersons continued to observe the daily pagan *officia* on behalf of former masters or new patrons, rather than observing Jewish customs, is not known.

⁸⁰ See section below on ‘Establishing the cultural mainstream.’

⁸¹ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 22.

⁸² Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 27.

⁸³ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 28.

⁸⁴ Leonard Victor Rutgers, “Archaeological Evidence for the Interaction of Jews and Non-Jews in Late Antiquity,” *AJA* 96 (1992): 116.

There is one Jew, Caecilius from Calacte in Sicily, a former slave who was notably a Jew by birth, who became a well-respected writer on rhetoric in Rome and a specialist in the movement to recover Attic Greek in oratory.⁸⁵ Caecilius was an exception, but nonetheless his situation teaches caution in the overuse of generalisations in applying assimilation theory.

In summary, a limited number of modern scholars working in ancient contexts have used assimilation theory as a method of study. In each case, they have modified the theory to suit the area of study. Modifications reflect some of the significant differences between the modern and ancient worlds. Barclay and Harland have mostly used acculturation and integration (structural assimilation) as assimilation tools. This makes sense as these can be best discerned through the evidence. Harland approaches identification to a degree in his study of Jews in Hierapolis. There is least evidence in the ancient context for amalgamation. Dissimilation is variously referred to by modern scholars using assimilation theory.

The strengths of assimilation theory expressed by modern scholars is in disproving traditional ideas of the segregation of minority groups such as Jews and Christians. Their use of assimilation theory shows that there was significant interconnection between minority groups (at least Jews, on which most of their studies are based), and the mainstream culture, and that their group distinction remained. This opens new possibilities for understanding minority groups as diverse in expression, strong in presence, and resilient in maintaining ethnic cultural distinctions.

⁸⁵ In the Souda under the reference Καικίλιος, a Sicilian is named who practiced oratory in Rome under Augustus, who was ἀπὸ δούλων, from slaves, a Jew from birth, whose name was originally Ἀρχάγαθος. Caecilius did not actively promote Judaism in his literary works, but this may only imply that he was not a proselyte. See Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC – AD 135)*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd., 1986-87), 702.

These things make assimilation theory a fitting methodology to apply to this study in which I present the cultural environment as the place of interaction between cultural groups. I propose that assimilation theory will assist in making the case that a religious situation developed out of these interactions in which ideas of one highest god arose and flourished in minority groups and in their assimilating edges with the mainstream.

2.5 Assimilation theory: the method used in this study

“We are the Borg. Lower your shields and surrender your ships. We will add your biological and technical distinctiveness to our own. Your culture will adapt to service us. Resistance is futile.”⁸⁶

The alien Borg race in the *Star Trek* series is made up of a collective which assimilates other intelligent beings into itself. “You will be assimilated,” is a phrase preceding the act of taking another in the process of complete assimilation: biological, physical, technical, so that nothing distinctive of the individual or the race itself remains. The Borg assimilate multiple entire species and many more individuals in their relentless progress through the galaxy. The Borg are one of the most terrifying of the *Star Trek* aliens precisely because of their practice of complete assimilation. In this version of assimilation, the very essence of human distinction is removed.

⁸⁶ *Star Trek VIII: First Contact*, 1996.

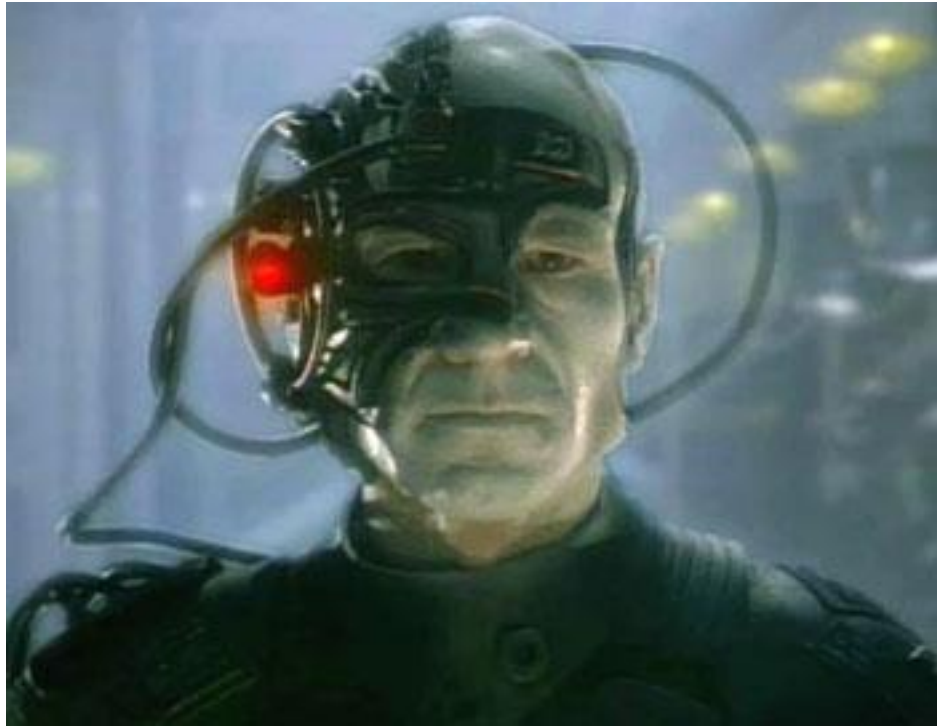


Figure 1: Patrick Stewart starring as Captain Jean-Luc Picard assimilated into the Borg as Locutus. By picture from DS9: "Emissary", <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=13035666>

The above picture of Captain Picard reflects a deep and common human fear that what makes us unique can be taken away. Even if not the taking away of biological humanity, it is still a fear that is shared by new migrants and refugees entering a foreign country with an all-encompassing mainstream cultural environment. The cultural distinctions of language, art, food, dress, values, religious beliefs, are the things that form groups of people into diverse representations of the human race. "You will be assimilated," is a phrase which sets up a negative reaction, a desire 'not to be the same.'

The word 'assimilate' or 'assimilation' from the point of individuals or small groups is frequently in popular usage a negative term, even when not applied to new or ethnic groups.⁸⁷ Used of a minority group, 'assimilate' means that a group is taken in and incorporated. 'Assimilation' is: "the process whereby individuals or groups of

⁸⁷ I recently took part in a seminar on Anglican women's ministry. The term 'assimilation' was in that context seen as a point where identity and individuality were lost to a social conformity identified as oppressive.

differing ethnic heritage, as migrant groups, or minority groups, acquire the basic attitudes, habits and mode of life of another all-embracing national culture.”⁸⁸ As a blanket definition the terms may be viewed negatively, especially when the incorporation of a smaller distinctive group into a larger group and the acquisition of new attitudes, habits and modes of life involve the loss of unique and precious human ways. In Australia, Aboriginal People suffered from a negative imposition of assimilation during the period of European colonisation and many qualities of their culture were threatened or lost.

In developing this methodology, I acknowledge that assimilation is not always a positive process. Historical examples of the systematic oppression of minority ethnic and cultural groups make a strong disclaimer for positive processes of assimilation into a mainstream.

However, in this study I present assimilation in an ancient context as a positive process with nuances of meaning. The positive process can be seen in the experience of rural dwelling indigenous pagan groups, urban Jews, and new Christian groups. These were minority groups existing within the mainstream cultural context of Hellenisation. The evidence of these groups strongly suggests they retained or developed group distinction in the period discussed even as they were actively involved in interaction with the cultural mainstream. Many minority groups are shown to be distinctive, successful, resilient, well incorporated in the formal and informal structures of society.

Following the examples of Barclay and Harland, this version of assimilation theory will focus on the subprocesses of acculturation and integration, (cultural assimilation and structural assimilation). These subprocesses are most represented in inscriptional evidence. Dissimilation is also notable and will be used where the evidence

⁸⁸ The *Macquarie Australian Dictionary* definitions of ‘assimilate’ and ‘assimilation.’

suggests. The subprocess of identification may be relevant especially to the emerging Christian groups.⁸⁹ There is least evidence for amalgamation and I will only refer to it occasionally.

I understand assimilation of minority groups in the cultural environment of Asia Minor to be variable, with a very few examples of complete assimilation.⁹⁰ As the evidence is unevenly spread between geographical locations, social status and gender, I find it helpful to apply Barclay's idea of ascribing levels of assimilation from high to low. I use a less defined scale than Barclay, and do not make use of the category of accommodation. The accumulation of factors contributing to acculturation and integration determines how I apply the scale of high to low. I measure assimilation against Hellenisation.

In this study, I present acculturation as the cultural practices and customs distinct to a cultural group. Acculturation includes language, education, architecture, symbolic decoration, food and eating habits, some religious practices. I incorporate the inculturation and enculturation named by Snyder⁹¹ as mutual acculturation. I do not specifically apply the terms substitutive and additive to acculturation as Yinger's modern method. I use integration as a process of structural assimilation. Integration includes the relationships between cultural groups and the structures of city and society. It also includes political relationships, employment, civic status positioning. I understand religion as both cultural and structural.

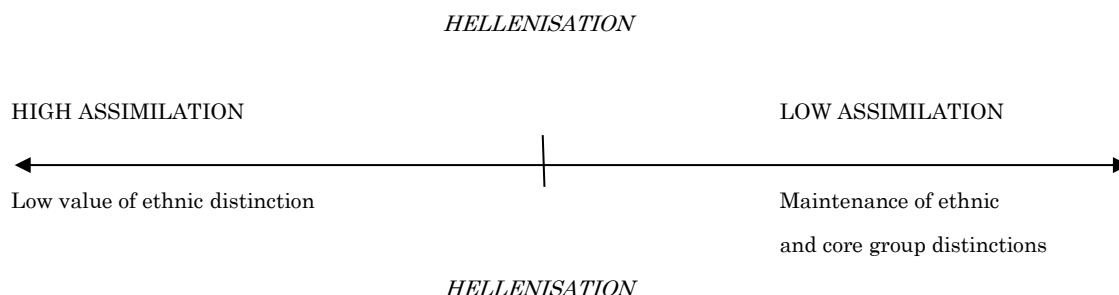
The following scales are designed to reflect the use of assimilation theory in this study. This first scale reflects the value of assimilation. It incorporates the subprocesses of acculturation and integration, which are also represented on scales.

⁸⁹ Christian groups will be studied in Chapter Nine.

⁹⁰ See note 92 below on some rare Jewish examples of complete assimilation.

⁹¹ Snyder, "Interaction of Jews with Non-Jews," 69-74.

ASSIMILATION SCALE



The scale of assimilation is measured against cultural Hellenisation as a mainstream in which a minority group is placed. To the far left of the scale is where complete assimilation belongs. The subprocesses of assimilation, which appear in the following two scales are in this study mostly defined as acculturation and integration. The subprocesses do not equate with the level of assimilation.

I have found Steven Bowman's distinction between assimilation and acculturation useful:

“Acculturation is the adoption of the majority language and dress and cultural peculiarities that do not violate the integrity of the minority tradition. Assimilation, on the other hand, is the acquisition of the majority culture to the exclusion of the minority identity.”⁹²

This clearly expressed distinction helps to keep in focus the fact that whilst many members of minority groups appeared thoroughly Hellenised, full or complete assimilation was rare. Where complete assimilation does occur, it is more likely to be on an individual level rather than group, at least for Jews.⁹³

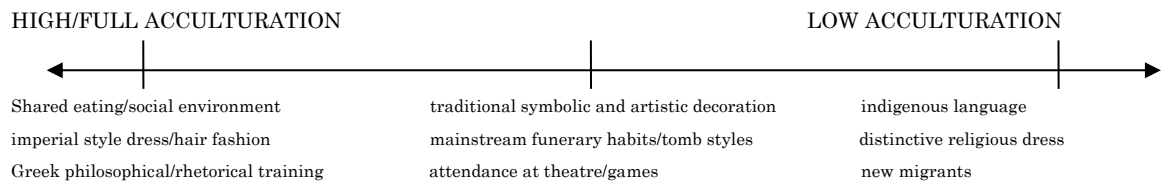
⁹² Steven Bowman, “From Hellenization to Graecization: The Byzantine-Jewish Synthesis,” in *Jewish Assimilation, Acculturation and Accommodation: Past Traditions, Current Issues and Future Prospects*, edited by Menachem Mor (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992), 38.

⁹³ Prominent examples include the Jewish royal Berenice who became the consort of the emperor Titus (Tacitus *Hist* 2.2.1; Cassius Dio 66.15.3-4), and from Antioch in Syria in the first century CE, Antiochos, who served in the Roman army, accused his father who was a Jewish magistrate of plotting against the city. Under pressure from Roman charges of revolutionary action by the Jews, Antiochos renounced his Jewish heritage (Josephus *Bell* 7.47-53). See Chapter 4 section 9, 9.1.

In this method, the subprocesses of acculturation and integration are similarly measured against Hellenisation.

Assimilation Subprocess 1

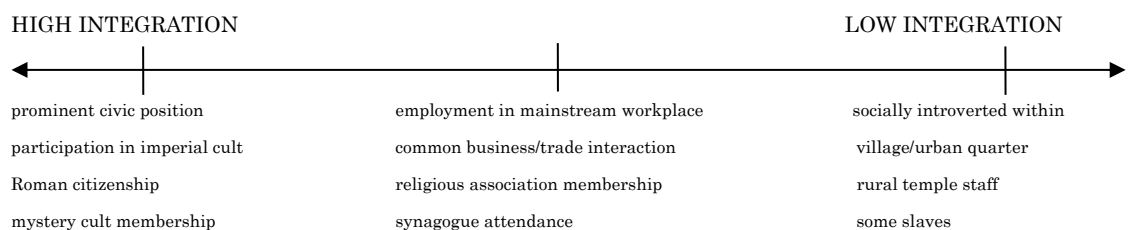
ACCULTURATION



Acculturation is only one process of assimilation. The complex interaction of cultural groups with each other and with the mainstream reflects the diversity of cultural groups and the variability of assimilation. Some acculturating practices resulted in maintenance of core group distinctions. An example is the use of indigenous language. Some acculturating practices increased the likelihood of at least some core group distinctions being released. An example is shared eating occasions with people outside of the minority group. Other acculturating practices give no indication of assimilation. An example is dress style or hair fashion.

Assimilation Subprocess 2

INTEGRATION



The scale of integration is measured against the formal and informal structures of Hellenistic society. It includes social, economic and political structures. Levels of integration on their own, as acculturation, do not indicate levels of assimilation.

Levels of both acculturation and integration are quantitative values. They are given noting the limitations already prescribed: limited evidence, fixed rank and status structure and related economic means, gender imbalance. Levels of acculturation and integration are separate, but related. High acculturation does not always mean high integration. A Hellenised member of an urban Jewish group may be proficient in Greek education, enjoy a shared eating and social environment beyond the minority group, but be fully integrated into the life of a synagogue community. This example shows high acculturation and medium integration with the Hellenistic mainstream. Alternatively, an indigenous language speaking Christian may be found in business dealings with a pagan Greek speaking merchant. This example shows low acculturation and medium integration. The least likely combinations are high acculturation and low integration,⁹⁴ or low acculturation and high integration.

The quantitative results of acculturation and integration may give insight into the degree of success that minority groups, as individual members and as whole groups, enjoyed in the cultural environment. Economic means and social inclusion may be discerned from the values, and an estimate of overall assimilation made.

The following model (Fig. 2) is a visual description of assimilation theory as it is used in this study. The purpose of the model is to assess the opportunities for interactional engagement between minority cultural groups and the mainstream. It is intended to provide a

⁹⁴ Slaves may be an exception. Educated, Greek speaking slaves had less opportunity to be engaged with either the formal or informal structures of Hellenistic culture.

framework for understanding the cultural environment as a place of shared relationships between different cultural groups. The model assists in working with the evidence of monotheism and monotheistic tendencies in minority groups in Asia Minor.

Observation of the practical experiences of day to day living may find more similarities than differences between ancient and modern situations, making assimilation theory a useful tool to analyse the wider environment in which these groups existed.

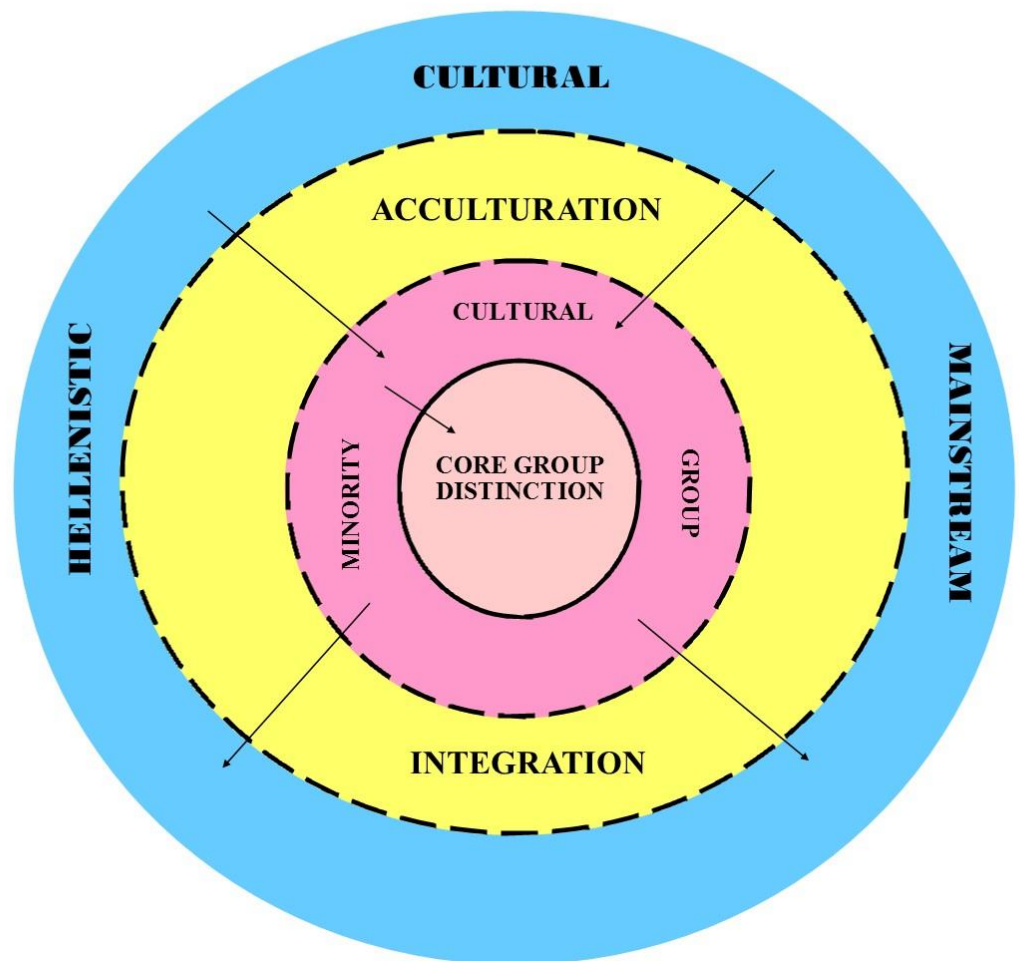


Figure 2 Assimilation Theory Model

The above diagram represents a visual description of the basic model of assimilation theory used in this study. At the centre is the core distinction of a minority cultural group. The arrow points inward from the minority group to the ethnic distinction. There is no connection between the ethnic distinction and the zones of integration and acculturation with the cultural mainstream. The minority group is connected to the mainstream through these zones without impairing the ethnic distinctive core. It is here where interaction occurs: the sharing of culture, customs, language, ideas, beliefs. The cultural mainstream also receives through the acculturating zone. Dashed lines represent the permeability of boundaries.

2.6 Establishing the cultural mainstream

In Asia Minor between the first and third centuries CE the cultural mainstream was Hellenism. Barclay defines Hellenism as: “the common urban culture in the eastern Mediterranean, founded on the Greek language, typically expressed in certain political and educational institutions and largely maintained by the social élite.”⁹⁵ This definition is narrow. I expand on this by suggesting that Hellenism incorporates the factors of both acculturation: language, dress, food and eating habits, religion, architecture, symbolic decoration; and integration: social and political relationships, employment, civic roles. The scope of these factors implies that Hellenism was much greater than the political and educational institutions maintained by the small group Barclay describes as the “social élite.” Hellenism was an aspiration for many who did not belong to this group.

Hellenism as a cultural concept does not have geographical boundaries.⁹⁶ It developed over the centuries following Alexander’s movement through the Mediterranean. It was subject to modification as it met other cultures like the Egyptian, Persian and Roman. Hellenism also engaged with indigenous Anatolian religion. Whilst Hellenism was an urban phenomenon with limited penetration into rural areas,⁹⁷ evidence of engagement beyond cities can be seen in the development of cults with merged Hellenistic and indigenous deities. Examples include Zeus Sabazios or Apollo Lairbenos. The merged deities incorporated features of both the Greek and the indigenous deity. Hellenism was tolerant of indigenous cultures and did not deliberately attempt to transform them. I find evidence of this is in the

⁹⁵ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 88.

⁹⁶ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 6.

⁹⁷ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 88.

ongoing presence of many local gods, strong, independent rural cult activity, and distinctive religious practices.⁹⁸

Whilst Hellenism provided scope for groups which did not share the same background, such as the indigenous Anatolian groups, for others it was an aspiration to which they responded. Its trends in material culture and social activity were appealing to people in places where news and commerce met. The cultural engagement of Hellenism created the concept of Hellenisation.⁹⁹ I prefer to use the term Hellenisation to Hellenism in this study. Hellenisation more fully describes the changing, adaptive and ongoing cultural processes that contributed to the mainstream environment. It is a more suitable description of the cultural environment for this study.

Hellenistic culture is made up of social, religious, political, linguistic, educational, ideological, and material aspects.¹⁰⁰ These can be related to both the acculturation and integration subprocesses of assimilation. Assessment of Hellenisation contributes to understanding the degree of assimilation of a minority cultural group. In this study, I seek to assess the extent of Hellenisation of minority Jewish, indigenous pagan, and Christian groups with a view to evaluating the assimilation of these groups through the inscriptional legacy. These groups are distinguished from the mainstream culture by practices and customs which appear distinct from Hellenisation.

Hellenisation does not represent opposition to the cultural expressions of minority groups. Diversity within Hellenisation is witnessed in the evidence of multiple cultural groups. This results in varied rates and extents of assimilation of such groups.

⁹⁸ Discussion of indigenous religious practices will follow in Chapters Four and Five.

⁹⁹ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 88-9.

¹⁰⁰ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 89-90.

In summary, in this study I understand Hellenisation as the cultural processes of Hellenism. Hellenisation was mostly found in urban contexts. It was primarily expressed through the Greek language. For minority groups, it implied a high degree of Graeco-Roman acculturation and integration, without presuming assimilation. Hellenisation represents the cultural mainstream of Asia Minor in the first three centuries CE. It is the matrix against which degrees of assimilation of minority groups may be measured.

2.7 The situations in Asia Minor in which assimilation theory may be applied

When individuals and groups of people are confronted with changed conditions to which they must adapt to live and function then assimilation theory applies. In the modern world assimilation theory is designed to study the processes of adaptation of migrant and ethnic groups to a new culture and society. In Asia Minor in the first three centuries CE assimilation theory can be applied to the minority groups identified in this study: indigenous rural dwelling pagans, Jews and Christians.

Not including proselytism and conversion, Jewish people were distinct through a common ethnic cultural heritage. Beyond the ancestral homelands and within a Hellenistic cultural mainstream, they were distinct groups identified as such through distinct practices. Christian groups either emerged from a pagan background, or they derived from Judaism, or were influenced by Judaism.¹⁰¹ Assimilation theory can be used of Christian groups because like Jews, they formed a culturally distinct group, with behaviours and values which were different from the mainstream.

¹⁰¹ In Chapter Nine I suggest that some pagans joined Christian groups because of involvement with monotheistic pagan cults, such as those devoted to Theos Hypsistos.

The purpose of ascertaining the degree of assimilation of groups is to draw conclusions about the level of interaction between different minority groups and the cultural mainstream. The extent of interaction forms the basis upon which an assessment of the cultural environment can be made. From this assessment, I draw conclusions about the viability of my claim that the cultural environment forms a matrix for expressions of a highest god which emerged from different minority groups.

2.8 Case study: a Jewish community in Akmonia

Of the known Jewish communities in Asia Minor, Akmonia makes an appropriate choice for a case study because it is neither unusually prominent, such as Jewish communities in Sardis,¹⁰² or smaller, as at Priene.¹⁰³ Much of the evidence of Jews in Akmonia is from the second and third centuries CE. Paul Trebilco's thorough study of Jewish communities in Asia Minor, and Johan Strubbe's detailed analysis of curse formulae on epitaphs have provided a base of evidence which I have drawn from in this section.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² The large synagogue complex discovered at Sardis indicates that a substantial Jewish community resided in Sardis. Archaeological investigation of the Sardis synagogue has been reported since the 1950s. See A. R. Seager and A. T. Kraabel, "The Synagogue and the Jewish Community," in *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times, Results of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis 1958-1975*, edited by G. M. A. Hanfmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983): 168-90.

¹⁰³ The synagogue building at Priene was smaller than that at Sardis, as reported first by German archaeologists T. Wiegand and H. Schrader, *Priene. Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen in den Jahren 1895-1898*, Königliche Museen zu Berlin, (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1904). However, the Priene synagogue site was not fully excavated until 2009-11. See Nadin Burkhardt and Mark Wilson, "The Late Antique Synagogue in Priene: Its History, Architecture, and Context," *Gephyra* 10 (2013): 166-96. This report suggests that in its first phase of use as a synagogue, the Priene building could hold between 93-125 people, Burkhardt and Wilson, 181-2, and 182, that the Priene Jewish community was small.

¹⁰⁴ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 58-84; Johan H. M. Strubbe, "Curses against Violation of the Grave in Jewish Epitaphs of Asia Minor," in *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy*, edited by Jan Willem van Henten and Pieter Willem van der Horst, (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 73-83.

Akmonia was an important trade and commerce centre in Phrygia in Asia Minor. It's location on a main road running between the cities of Dorylaion and Philadelphia contributed to its success in trade and commerce. Akmonia held military significance due to its location.¹⁰⁵ It was an active and prosperous city which minted its own coins by the first century BCE.¹⁰⁶ Evidence of priests of the imperial cult in Akmonia indicates Roman governing authority in the city.¹⁰⁷ It may be inferred from Josephus that Jews were settled there in the relocation of Zeuxis in 205 BCE, although there is no direct evidence for this.¹⁰⁸ If such a settlement began around then, it would indicate that Jewish presence in the city was well-established by the imperial era.

A notable civic person in Akmonia sympathetic to the Jews was Julia Severa. She was patron of the synagogue built in the first century CE. A significant inscription recording repairs to the synagogue at Akmonia names Julia Severa as founding patron, Loukios son of Loukios and Publius Tyrronios Klados as leaders of the synagogue, Popilios Zotikos as archon.¹⁰⁹ These last three contributed to the restoration work:

τὸν κατασκευασθέντα οἴκον ὑπὸ | Ἰουλίας Σεουήρας Π.
 Τυρρώνιος Κλά|δος ὁ διὰ βίου ἀρχισυνάγωγος καὶ | Λούκιος
 Λουκίου ἀρχισυνάγωγος | καὶ Ποπίλιος Ζωτικός ἄρχων
 ἔπε|σκεύασαν ἕκ τε τῶν ἰδίων καὶ τῶν συν| καταθεμένων καὶ
 ἔγραψαν τοὺς τοί|χους καὶ τὴν ὀροφὴν καὶ ἐποιήσαν | τὴν
 τῶν θυρίδων ἀσφάλειαν καὶ τὸν | [λυ]πὸν πάντα κόσμον, οὔστινας
 κα[τ] | ἡ συναγωγὴ ἐτέμνησεν ὄπλω ἐπιχύ|σω διὰ τε τὴν ἐνάρετον
 αὐτῶν δ[ι]άθ[ε]σιν καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὴν συναγωγὴν εὐνοϊάν | τε καὶ
 σ[που]δήν¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Josephus *Antiquities* 12.147.

¹⁰⁶ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 58.

¹⁰⁷ See discussion below on Julia Severa who was ἀρχιτέρεια of the imperial cult.

¹⁰⁸ Josephus *Antiquities* 12.147-53. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 58 also comments.

¹⁰⁹ See discussion on the relationship between these figures and the Jewish hierarchy in Ameling, "Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien," 50-51.

¹¹⁰ *MAMA* VI 264; *IJO* 168; *IGR* 4.655.

This building was fully equipped by Julia Severa; Publius Tyrronios Klados, leader of the synagogue for life and Loukios son of Loukios, leader of the synagogue, and Poplios Zotikos, archon, restored it out of their own means and with funds deposited they donated the paintings for the walls and ceiling made firm the windows and made all the remaining decoration, and the synagogue honoured them with a gold plated shield because of their virtuous disposition and both their kindness and zeal toward the synagogue.

The inscription still notes Julia’s founding beneficence years later when the repairs were recorded, indicating her importance in the city.¹¹¹ Julia would have been a woman of wealth and position. Her family was influential in Asia Minor.¹¹² Julia’s son Lucius Servenius Cornutus was a senator under Nero and *legatus* to the proconsul of Asia in about 73 CE. Senatorial membership required both wealth and aristocratic lineage. Julia’s relative Gaius Iulius Severus was consul. Julia herself was high priest of the imperial cult, holding office for at least three terms in the reign of Nero. She was also ἀγωνοθέτη, president or judge of the games.¹¹³

Julia’s office as high priest of the imperial cult makes it unlikely she was a Jew herself, despite her contribution to the synagogue. She is nonetheless benevolent to the cause of the Jewish community and the Jewish leadership had no issue in receiving the gift, despite her involvement in a pagan cult. As Trebilco says, the beneficence of

¹¹¹ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 59 suggests a date for this inscription between the 80s and 90s of the first century CE.

¹¹² According to Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 140, Julia’s family were: “descendants of Galatian and Attalid royalty who entered into imperial service as equestrians and then senators by the late first century.”

¹¹³ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 59; William Ramsay, *The Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*, 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897) 639; B. V. Head, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Phrygia*, (London: British Museum, 1906), xxii 6, 9-11; H. S. von Aulock, *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum, Deutschland, Sammlung von Aulock*, Heft 18, (Berlin: Mann, 1968) no 8311; *MAMA VI* 263.1-9: ἡ γερουσία ἐτέϊ | μησεν Ἰουλίαν Γαίου θυ | γατέρα Σεούη | ραν, ἀρχιέρειαν κα[ῖ] | ἀγωνοθέτιν τοῦ | σύνπαντος τῶν | [θ]εῶν Σεβαστῶν | [οἴ]κου – *the council of elders honoured Julia Severa daughter of Gaius, high priest and agonothete of the whole household of the divine augustus.*

pagans of means towards Jews was not unique.¹¹⁴ The willingness of culturally mainstream pagans of means to provide generously to the Jewish people is an example of well-established social contacts, of friendships made, and the mutual respect that is the result of acculturation and integration.

Whilst the synagogue at Akmonia was unlikely to have been as elaborate as that built at the later Sardis,¹¹⁵ it was nonetheless a prominent building within the city scape.¹¹⁶ The Julia Severa inscription notes wall and ceiling paintings, ornamentation, window reinforcement, probable column capitals, and the gift of a gilded shield to those paying for the repairs. The wealth of the two leaders of the synagogue named, Publius and Loukios, and the archon Popilios, is evident in the substantial gifts they made. It is to be presumed that these three were Jews. Ameling notes that elevation of people to official positions in the Jewish hierarchy required financial gratitude on the part of those acquiring office.¹¹⁷

The names of the Jewish benefactors of the building upgrade and the gift of the gilded shield is evidence of integration of Jewish citizens into mainstream Hellenistic customs.¹¹⁸ Julia Severa as prominent citizen of Akmonia and as founding patron of the synagogue, elevated

¹¹⁴ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 59.

¹¹⁵ The synagogue at Sardis is variously dated from the late third century CE to the sixth century CE. Marianne Palmer Bonz, "Differing Approaches to Religious Benefaction: The Late Third-Century Acquisition of the Sardis Synagogue," *HTR* 86/2 (1993): 139-54, and at 152 summarising that declining economic conditions meant part of the bath-gymnasium complex was acquired from the city by the Jewish community in Sardis. Helga Botermann, "Die Synagoge von Sardes: Eine Synagoge aus dem 4. Jahrhundert?" *ZNW* 81 (1990): 103-21 argues for a date in the fourth century, while Marcus Rautman, "Daniel at Sardis," *BASOR* 358 (2010): 53, suggests the late fourth to fifth centuries, and Jodi Magness, "The Date of the Sardis Synagogue in Light of the Numismatic Evidence," *AJA* 109 (2005): 457, prefers as late as the sixth century, based in coin finds.

¹¹⁶ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 59 accepts that the date of the Julia inscription marks the synagogue at Akmonia the earliest in Asia Minor.

¹¹⁷ Ameling, "Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien," 41.

¹¹⁸ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 60.

the civic position of the synagogue and of its Jewish members by her patronage.

2.8.1 Tomb protection and the calling down of curses

Further evidence of Jewish presence in Akmonia is found in epitaphs which attempted to prevent violation of tombs. In Asia Minor, there was a widespread practice of tomb protection between pagans, Jews and Christians.¹¹⁹ The commonality of the practice across cultural groups and the identical formulae used makes it difficult to determine if a curse was Jewish or non-Jewish.¹²⁰ Curses called down the god whose name would be offended by the violation. As the examples set out below show, in the case of Jewish tombs reference is sometimes made to the threats of the Jewish god against human violators of the covenant found in the Book of Deuteronomy. The custom of tomb protection was adapted in these cases to be acceptable to the religious distinctiveness of the Jewish people. It is an example of selective acculturation, where a certain custom is deemed to be useful to the aspirations of the community, and has been appropriately adapted.

The tomb protection inscriptions would frequently require a fine to be paid to either an heir, the municipality, or a religious association which protected the tomb.¹²¹ Curse and fine formulae are uncommon in Jewish inscriptions outside of Asia Minor.¹²² This may mean only that

¹¹⁹ Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 70. On this practice see also, J. H. M. Strubbe, ΑΠΑΙ ΕΠΙΤΥΜΒΙΟΙ: *Imprecations Against Desecrators of the Grave in the Greek Epitaphs of Asia Minor. A Catalogue*, IGSK 52 (Bonn: Habelt, 1997).

¹²⁰ Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 70.

¹²¹ For example, *IJO* 172.18-20 for the formula: εἴ τις δὲ ἐπιχρήση ἀνῶξαι, θήσιν ἰς τὸ ταμίον προστίμου * φ' - *if anyone [tries] to open it, they will put into the treasury a further penalty of 500 denarii.*

¹²² Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 60-61 cites notable absence of these formulae at Beth Shearim, Palestine, Syria and Europe. Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 126-7 catalogue no. 14 cites an example of a curse inscription found in the Jewish cemetery of the vigna Randanini at Rome (now in Museo

grave violation occurred more frequently in Asia than elsewhere. It also indicates that Jews there were open to the acculturating influences of the surrounding culture. From Strubbe's catalogue of fourteen examples of Jewish curse epitaphs, eight are from Akmonia.¹²³

Grave violation usually meant the interring of another corpse within the grave. It could also mean damage to the memorial, including the erasure of the inscription.¹²⁴ It is not the same as desecration by vandalism that we might associate with grave violation today. The need to issue protective warnings of the sort indicated by the evidence suggests that the cost of burial was significant. There were obviously people who were not able to afford the process for their loved ones who resorted to interment in an already established tomb.¹²⁵ The prominence of funerary associations which provided a type of insurance for the proper processes of dealing with the dead supports the proposal that burial costs were prohibitively high for some people.¹²⁶

In Akmonia the Deuteronomy references suggest Jewish tombs,¹²⁷ although Strubbe suggests that the availability of the Septuagint to both Jews and Christians means that references to Deuteronomy may

Nazionale Romano inv. No. 72932). Strubbe posits that this is the grave of a Phrygian Jew.

¹²³ Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 111-124; catalogue nos. 5-12.

¹²⁴ Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 71.

¹²⁵ Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 71 suggests that all the offences of violation were undertaken by the poor and destitute.

¹²⁶ From Akmonia an association known as ἡ γειτοσύνη τῶν πρωτοπυλειτῶν, the neighbourhood of the first gate, is charged with maintaining a grave. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 79 suggests this group was a burial society or association. Text in William Ramsay, *The Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), 562-4, nos. 455-7; *IJO* 171.

¹²⁷ *MAMA* VI 335a; *IJO* 173; L. Robert, *Hellenica. Recueil d'épigraphie de numismatique et d'antiquités grecques*, 10, (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1955), 249. Lines 15-17 of the inscription read: ἔσται αὐτῷ αἱ ἀραὶ | ἡ γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ Δευτερο | νομίῳ - *the curses which have been written in Deuteronomy will be upon that one.*

well be Christian.¹²⁸ These curses may be read in Deuteronomy chapters 27-28. They are comprehensive and unpleasant. Anyone familiar with the text would be sufficiently warned. The curses contained in Deuteronomy are directly related to the giving of the covenant. In the corpus of Phrygian curse inscriptions, to which those in Akmonia belong, it is not always clear that the curse is related to the breaking of the covenant, but rather simply to the violation of a grave. Deuteronomy 28.32, 36 refer to expulsion from the land, which was a reality for the people for whom the texts were composed. Trebilco's understanding is that the Jews would have been obedient to god in the present time because restoration is implied and the curses will transfer to the enemy (Deut 30.1).¹²⁹

The inscriptional evidence of Jewish people in Akmonia shows that the people were successful and integrated into the wider Hellenistic city. Jews in Akmonia became settled residents of their land and it became home for children and future generations. Assimilation theory testifies to the settling of people over the years, and in most circumstances the result is satisfactory for both the new group and the majority culture, even when assimilation is only variably achieved. The sting of dispossession for the Jews in Akmonia and the desire for restoration might be less of an issue than Trebilco states, and not as extreme as "the present destruction" as he refers to it.¹³⁰

The following tomb protection curse from an inscription from Akmonia reads:

¹²⁸ Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 89. Strubbe, 90 after considering the evidence however, concludes that the Deuteronomy inscriptions were probably Jewish. See also discussion in Bij de Vaate and van Henten, "Jewish or Non-Jewish," 20-21.

¹²⁹ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 66-7.

¹³⁰ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 66.

ἔσται δὲ | ἐπικατάρατος ὁ τουοῦ | τος κὲ ὅσαι ἀραὶ ἐν τῷ |
Δευτερονομίῳ εἰσὶν γε | γραμμέναι αὐτῷ τε κὲ | τέκνοις κὲ ἐγγόνοις
κὲ | παντὶ τῷ γένει αὐτοῦ γένοιτο¹³¹

*This man will be yet more cursed and as many curses as are
written in Deuteronomy be upon him and upon his children and
descendants and upon all his generation.*

The specific curse and restoration from Deuteronomy is found at
30.7.¹³² The formula is found again in an inscription honouring
Aurelios Phrougianos:

εἰ δὲ τις μετὰ τὸ τεθῆναι | αὐτοῦς εἰ τις θάψει ἕτερον | νεκρὸν ἢ
ἀδικήσει λόγῳ | ἀγορασίας, ἔσται αὐτῷ αἰ ἀραὶ | ἢ γεγραμμέναι
ἐν τῷ Δευτερο | νομίῳ¹³³

*and if anyone after interring them will bury another corpse or
will do wrong with a word purchased the curses which have
been written in Deuteronomy will be upon that one*

The use of the formula referring to Deuteronomy became such a
common practice that some deemed it unnecessary to write that the
curses came from that source. An altar with an inscription depicting
this phenomenon reads:

Main face of altar

Ἐγένετο ἔτους τκη´. Τ. Φλ. Ἀλέξανδρος ζῶν ἑαυτῷ καὶ Γαιανῇ
γυναικὶ τὸ μνημεῖον κατασκεύασεν μνήμης χάριν, βουλεύσας,
ἄρξας, ζήσας καλῶς, μηδένα λοιπήσας· μετὰ δὲ τεθῆναι ἐμὲ τὸν
Ἀλέξανδρον καὶ τὴν σύνβιον μου Γαιανήν, εἴ τις ἀνύξη τὸ μνημίον,
ἔσονται αὐτῷ κατάραι ὅσε ἀνγεγραμμέναι ἴσιν εἰς ὄρασιν καὶ ἰς
ὄλον τὸ σῶμα αὐτῷ καὶ εἰς τέκνα καὶ εἰς βίον· εἴ τις δὲ ἐπιχρήση
ἀνύξαι, θήσι ἰς τὸ ταμίον προστίμου * φ´

On three other faces of the altar

Εἰρηναρχία. Σειτωνία. – Βουλαρχία. Ἀγορανομία. --¹³⁴

*It happened in the year 328¹³⁵ Titus Flavius Alexandros in his
own lifetime prepared a tomb for himself and his wife Gaiana for*

¹³¹ MAMA VI 335 lines 14-20; IJO 174; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 62; Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 117-18; catalogue no. 8.

¹³² Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 67.

¹³³ MAMA VI 335a lines 12-17; IJO 173.

¹³⁴ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 62; IJO 172; Robert, *Hellenica. Recueil d'épigraphie de numismatique et d'antiquités grecques*, 10, 253.

¹³⁵ 243-4 CE.

the favour of a memorial, he having been a councillor, archon, having lived well, done nobody ill. When we have died, me Alexandros and my spouse Gaiana, if anyone opens the tomb, there will be upon him curses as many as have been written, upon his sight, and his whole body and his children and his life; if anyone [tries] to open it, they will put into the treasury a further penalty of 500 denarii.

Warden of the peace, corn purchaser. Chief of the council – clerk of the market. Chief magistrate – corn purchaser.

The content of the curses from the Book of Deuteronomy must have been well enough known that mere mention of ‘what has been written’ was sufficient warning to potential trespassers.¹³⁶ It also implies that there was wide exposure and respect for Jewish tradition that the curses were believed to be effective against non-Jews in Akmonia who might be thinking of tomb violation against a Jewish grave.

2.8.2 Jewish civic involvement

The person who commissioned the above inscription, Titus Flavius Alexandros, was a person of some note in Akmonia. He had served on the council (βουλευσας), and as archon (ἄρχας). An archon was a general name for a member of a magisterial board.¹³⁷ Several other titles appear on the three other faces of the altar on which this inscription is engraved: εἰρηναρχία, warden of the peace; σειτωνία, corn purchaser (mentioned on two different faces); βουλαρχία, chief of the council; ἀγορανομία, clerk of the market; στρατηγία, chief magistrate. These positions required personal wealth and status. According to Ameling, officials were chosen to represent the Jewish community based on

¹³⁶ Strubbe, “Curses Against Violation of the Grave,” 100 alerts us to the fact that as many of those who committed grave violation were poor and destitute, they were unlikely to be literate. He suggests that it was nonetheless common knowledge that grave violation was wrong. He assumes that the curses say more about those who wrote them rather than those who read them.

¹³⁷ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 214 n. 26.

social status. This meant sometimes women, minors, and even non-Jews were elevated to these positions.¹³⁸ Office holders were expected to provide from their own means should a period of economic difficulty come upon the city. Pressure on the corn purchaser would be to reduce the cost of the grain to below cost price to assist the poor when times were lean. The importance of Titus' role as corn purchaser is emphasised by the repetition of *σειτωνία*.

Serving on the council was reserved for those who held property, meaning it was a position only the wealthy could acquire. It was usually a position elected for life and the role was frequently inherited. This implies that the chief of the council, the *βούλαρχος*, held significant power. The chief was entitled to call meetings, lead negotiations and supervise the carrying out of council decisions. Trebilco describes this position as “near the pinnacle of civic government.”¹³⁹

The warden of the peace, the *εἰρηνάρχης*, was also a position of significant responsibility, ensuring order and public discipline was maintained. The position also involved managing public morals and monitoring and suppressing serious crime in the city. The governor selected the person for this role from a list of ten leading citizens recommended by the council.

The Alexandros inscription must be dated after the emperors Severus and Caracalla (193-217 CE) allowed Jews to hold civic office.¹⁴⁰ This permission allowed Jews to abstain from acts which compromised their religious distinction.¹⁴¹ If official permission given to Jews included

¹³⁸ Walter Ameling, “Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien,” in *Jüdische Gemeinden und Organisationsformen von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, edited by R. Jütte and A. P. Kustermann, (Vienna: Bohlau, 1996), 41.

¹³⁹ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor.*, 64.

¹⁴⁰ Ameling, “Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien,” 53 says that it was the urgent need to fill civic roles with people of means which encouraged this imperial permission giving.

¹⁴¹ Diogenes Laertius 3.2.3.

flexibility around acts such as participation in pagan sacrifice and carrying out duties on the Sabbath, it indicates that many Jews were highly regarded.¹⁴² As the name, Titus Flavius Alexandros indicates, Roman citizenship for this Jewish man's family came from the era of Vespasian or Titus (69-81 CE). His family had held citizenship for over 150 years.¹⁴³

Jewish people appear from the evidence to be well regarded within Akmonia and integrated into the civic and political structures. The Alexandros inscription, and that of the prominent Jew Aurelios Phrougianos,¹⁴⁴ who was also clerk of the market, corn purchaser, overseer of all magistracies and public liturgy duties, and chief magistrate,¹⁴⁵ both with respected positions and significant social status, attest to this. From the inscriptional evidence of prominent citizens, it is reasonable to assume that other Jews were active in the city. These two inscriptions are comparatively late (mid third century CE) but the citizenship dating of the Alexandros family indicates that their rank and status had been around since the Flavian period (69-96 CE).

If Jews were not allowed to withdraw from activities which might cause conflict with their religious beliefs until the reigns of Severus and Caracalla, the question of degree of involvement of prominent Jewish citizens in the wider civic and social life, including public pagan religious ceremonies, before that time must be asked. Did some make

¹⁴² But see Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 104 who says that the funerary maledictions especially of Akmonia, Nikomedeia and Apameia show no evidence that pagans had knowledge of or respected Jewish tradition, writings or god. He then goes on to immediately qualify the Alexandros inscription as an example of good relations between Jews and Greeks. See also Bij de Vaate and van Henten, "Jewish or Non-Jewish," 21 who suggest that Alexandros was either a pagan or god-fearer.

¹⁴³ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 64-65.

¹⁴⁴ *MAMA VI 335a; IJO 173*.

¹⁴⁵ *MAMA VI 335a; IJO 173* Face B lines 1-8: ἀγορανομία | σειτωνεία | παραφυλακεία | πάσας ἀρχάς | καὶ λειτουργίας τελέσας καὶ | στρατηγήσαν | τα – *clerk of the market, corn purchaser, guard of all magistracies and discharges of liturgy duties and having been chief magistrate*.

concessions to pagan customs to further their own and their family's role in the city, to become socially and economically mobile, to achieve success? The two important civic people discussed above, Aurelios Phrougianos and Titus Flavius Alexandros, are to be dated after Severus and Caracalla. Even then, Sheppard questions how Jews were so successful in public life when their contact with pagan society was meant to be limited by rabbinic rules.¹⁴⁶ Permission for Jews to hold public office is not mentioned in the Mishnah.¹⁴⁷ However, the degree to which Jews in Asia Minor followed rabbinic guidelines is virtually impossible to discern. Anna Collar suggests that rabbinic guidelines did influence Jewish reforms in the west, but her survey provides limited evidence for adherence of rabbinic rules in Asia.¹⁴⁸ Collar's assessment of a new flourishing of Jewish ethnicity in the second and third centuries is based on her assumption that rabbinic influence increased following the lifting of the *fiscus Iudaicus*. Again, there is little evidence of this in the eastern empire.¹⁴⁹

The support given toward the Jewish community by pagans with official civic and political standing, such as Julia Severa in the first century, suggests respect toward the Jewish community, increasing the likelihood that official involvement of Jews did not compromise core group religious distinctions even before the third century.

¹⁴⁶ A. R. R. Sheppard, "Jews, Christians and Heretics in Acmonia and Eumeneia," *AS* 29 (1979): 169-70.

¹⁴⁷ The section of the Mishnah referring to contact with non-Jews, or idolaters, is the *Abodah Zarah*.

¹⁴⁸ See Anna Collar, *Religious Networks in the Roman Empire: The Spread of New Ideas*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Chapter Four, "The Jewish Diaspora in the west: the rabbinic reforms, ethnicity and the (re?)activation of Jewish identity."

¹⁴⁹ Ameling, "Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien," 43-44 suggests that it was from the imposition of the *fiscus Iudaicus* that the Jewish communities began to be identified as a distinct religion.

It seems Jews, pagans, and probably Christians,¹⁵⁰ shared some burial practices.¹⁵¹ In Akmonia it is likely that Jews and pagans buried their dead along the same road leading from the city, even if they had their own section.¹⁵² The engraved altar of Aurelios Phrougianos from the third century CE is of a pagan style. It is the latest of five extant, comparable engraved altars, suggesting that Jews in civic office as well as influential pagans who moved in the same social and political spheres, favoured the pagan style.¹⁵³ It might also indicate that there were limited choices available for funerary monuments.¹⁵⁴ These were elaborate and expensive monuments, clearly not the luxury of ordinary citizens. A pagan who served on the council, Aurelios Basileus Olunpos, chose a similar monument.¹⁵⁵ For Aurelios Phrougianos a statement of his success is implied in his choice of monument. It is also an indication of at least moderate acculturation.

2.8.3 Curses on the τέκνα τέκνων

Another type of curse formula found at Akmonia invites the curse to be upon the τέκνα τέκνων, the children's children of the offender. The following example is inscribed upon a door stone with six decorated panels:

Ἄμμία Εὐτύχου [Κ]αλιμάχῳ ἀνδρὶ καὶ ἑαυτῇ | ἐκ τῆς ἰδίας προικὸς
τὸ μνη|μεῖον κατασκεύασεν· ἀρὰ δὲ | ἔσται εἰς τέκνα τέκνων

¹⁵⁰ Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1, 189 refers to Christians who used curse formulae on tombs. See also discussion in Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 71 and throughout.

¹⁵¹ Ameling, "Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien," 52.

¹⁵² Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 101.

¹⁵³ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 68.

¹⁵⁴ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 5 proposes that Jews were dependent on the mainstream for their material culture. It was only later, after the third century CE that Jews began to develop their own artistic styles. I discuss this as part of my assessment of Jewish ethnic distinction in urban communities in Chapter Four.

¹⁵⁵ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 68.

ἔτε|ρον μὴ τεθῆναι ἢ τὸν υἱὸν μο[υ] | Εὐτύχην καὶ γυναῖκα
αὐ[τ]οῦ¹⁵⁶

Ammia, daughter of Eutyches prepared the memorial for her husband Kalimachos and herself out of her own dowry; the curse will be upon the children's children should another be buried except my son Eutyches and his wife.

Eight such inscriptions have been discovered in Phrygia, in the region of Akmonia, mostly from the second and third centuries CE.¹⁵⁷ Strubbe thinks the general meaning of the term is that the offender and descendants will be punished for violating a grave.¹⁵⁸ Strubbe and Trebilco differ in identifying the religious origin of the τέκνα τέκνων curse.¹⁵⁹ Bij de Vaate and van Henten are dubious that there is sufficient evidence to equate the curses with Jewish origin.¹⁶⁰ Trebilco follows the line of scholars such as Ramsay, Frey and Kraabel in identifying the curse as Jewish.¹⁶¹ Strubbe argues against the Jewish origin of the curse on the basis that it is not a specification founded in Exodus 34 as Trebilco presents, but rather an extension of typical pagan curses beyond the offender.¹⁶² Strubbe suggests that the regular Greek uses of the τέκνα τέκνων formula is behind the texts Trebilco cites as Jewish.¹⁶³ He concludes that from the selection of these curses any close connection between Jews and pagans cannot be established, as Trebilco says.¹⁶⁴ Strubbe presents a convincing case, however I

¹⁵⁶ *MAMA VI 287; CIG Vol. 3, 1094; CIG 763. Trebilco, Jewish Communities in Asia Minor, 69.*

¹⁵⁷ Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 74-6.

¹⁵⁸ Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 79.

¹⁵⁹ Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 73-83; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 69-74.

¹⁶⁰ Bij de Vaate and van Henten, "Jewish or Non-Jewish," 22.

¹⁶¹ Ramsay, *Cities and Bishoprics I*; A. T. Kraabel, *Judaism in Western Asia Minor under the Roman Empire*, (Harvard: Cambridge Mass., 1968), 82-86; Frey, *CIJ II*. Strubbe points readers to a compilation of references of similar scholarship in M. Waelkens, *Die kleinasiatischen Türsteine. Typologische und epigraphische Untersuchungen der kleinasiatischen Grabreliefs mit Scheintür*, (Mainz am Rhein, 1986), 166 to no. 411.

¹⁶² Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 80-81. See also Bij de Vaate and van Henten, "Jewish or Non-Jewish," 22-23.

¹⁶³ Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 81.

¹⁶⁴ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 73.

think he has understated the strength of relationship between Jews and pagans in Akmonia at least, as can be discerned through the patronising of the synagogue by Julia Severa and the influence of several leading Jewish citizens discussed in this section.¹⁶⁵

An example of a pagan inscription containing the curse is found near Akmonia, but Trebilco considers this is likely to be an imitation of the Jewish inscriptions.¹⁶⁶ Whether an imitation of Jewish use of the curse or as Strubbe suggests, a common pagan funerary malediction, the inscription nonetheless shows the belief that the curse formula would work was widespread and not limited to any specific group. It may be an example of selective and mutual acculturating practices between Jews and mainstream pagans.

The widely known meaning of the curse is shown in some instances when the threat is not fully expressed:

τις δὲ κακῶς ποίσει ταύτη τῇ γουντῇ, ἔξει τέκνα τέκνων ἀράν¹⁶⁷
*and if someone should act badly upon this grave, he shall have
the curse children's children.*

These examples do not expressly state that ‘the curse shall be upon the children’s children.’ Trebilco suggests that the word γούντη is found only in Akmonia, and may be of Phrygian origin. If so, it shows the influence of indigenous religious practices and the persistence of indigenous vocabulary.¹⁶⁸ The word γούντη refers to the grave, or part of the grave.¹⁶⁹ An inscription from Oinoanda in Lykia contains a curse

¹⁶⁵ Strubbe, “Curses Against Violation of the Grave,” 83.

¹⁶⁶ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 71.

¹⁶⁷ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 70; J. Keil and A. von Premerstein, *Bericht über eine zweite Reise in Lydien*, DAW philosophische-historische Klasse Band 54.2, (Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1911) 137 no 255; *CIG* 767 (incomplete).

¹⁶⁸ See study on indigenous languages in Chapter Four section 4.4.

¹⁶⁹ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 215, note 49. Trebilco cites W. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discoveries on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914b) 369 note 2, and *MAMA* VI 101. I cannot source the word in any lexicon.

on the τέκνα τέκνων.¹⁷⁰ The invocation to θεοῖς πᾶσιν καὶ πάσαις, all gods, male and female, to carry out the curse indicates this is a pagan text. The similarity in formula of the inscription relates the text to Akmonia. It suggests that the usage spread to other places, and that religious boundaries were no barrier to its application.

The phrase τέκνα τέκνων is found in the context of cursing in the Book of Exodus (Ex 34.6-7),¹⁷¹ and elsewhere a similar expression τοῖς τέκνοις τῶν τέκνων is found,¹⁷² but it seems the particular usage of τέκνα τέκνων is for cursing. The handing down of curses through generations has a precedent in the ancient Greek literary tradition.¹⁷³ When unfortunate Thyestes mistakenly ate the flesh of his children, deceitfully served to him at a banquet, a curse on the house Atreus was instigated, through his children and children's children, and so on, until Orestes purged the curse.¹⁷⁴

Inscriptional imprecations on the violators of graves are related to the confession inscriptions of Lydia and Phrygia.¹⁷⁵ Both grave imprecations and confession texts were composed with the expectation that god will administer justice on an offender. In the practice of public confession, the offender set up a stele with a public inscription recording the offence and punishment. People understood that the god administering justice required this process. The vision of a god with awesome power overwhelming mortals is a perspective in Asia Minor common to both curse formulae on tombs and confession inscriptions. I

¹⁷⁰ ἐτέρῳ δὲ μηδεὶν ἐξὸν εἶναι ἐπισε | | νέγκε πτώμα ἢ ἕσ | ται ἐπάρατος θεοῖς | πᾶσιν καὶ πάσαις | τέκνα τέκνων – *It is not permitted for anyone else to bring into the grave a corpse or else that one will be cursed by all the gods, male and female, unto the children's children.* Strubbe, “Curses Against Violation of the Grave,” 78; R. Heberdey and E. Kalinka, *Bericht über zwei Reisen im südwestlichen Kleinasien*, DAW, philosophische-historische Klasse Band 45.1, (Vienna: Carl Gerolds Sohn, 1896) no. 74; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 217 n. 68.

¹⁷¹ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 71.

¹⁷² LXX Ex 10.2; Jos 22.24; Joel 1.3; Prov 17.6.

¹⁷³ Which supports Strubbe's assessment that the curse τέκνα τέκνων has its origins in Greek pagan tradition.

¹⁷⁴ Aeschylus' trilogy, *Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers*, *Eumenides*.

¹⁷⁵ Discussed at length in Chapter Five.

later discuss that this view of the power of the gods in Asia Minor produced an attitude of humility associated with the tendency toward monotheism.¹⁷⁶

2.8.4 Further biblical cursing

Jews in dispersed communities following the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE, who could no longer speak the Hebrew of their ancestry, relied on the Septuagint for understanding the Hebrew Scriptures.¹⁷⁷ The spoken and written language had become Greek for these communities.¹⁷⁸ Evidence of Jewish presence in Akmonia is found in further curse inscriptions reflecting material from the Septuagint beyond the Book of Deuteronomy. The ἀράς δρέπανον, sickle of curse, is found in the Septuagint, at Zechariah 5.1-5.¹⁷⁹ Bij de Vaate and van Henten, in addition to Strubbe, caution against Trebilco's assessment of the sickle curse as Jewish because of the Jewish familiarity with the Septuagint. Strubbe reminds readers that the Septuagint was both a Jewish and a Christian book.¹⁸⁰ Bij de Vaate and van Henten note the echo of the curse in the Book of Revelation.¹⁸¹ From this they say that the curses may be both Christian and Jewish.¹⁸²

In the Zechariah passage the prophet sees a vision of a flying sickle.¹⁸³ The angel interprets the sickle as the means of delivering a curse

¹⁷⁶ See Chapter Six.

¹⁷⁷ Ameling, "Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien," 42.

¹⁷⁸ During the second century CE however, the Greek version of scriptures translated by Aquila and Theodotion was available to many Jews, Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 75.

¹⁷⁹ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 75.

¹⁸⁰ Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 87, which Trebilco himself also admits.

¹⁸¹ Bij de Vaate and van Henten, 19 referring to Rev 14.16: καὶ ἔβαλεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης τὸ δρέπανον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ ἐθερίθη ἡ γῆ - *and the one sitting on the cloud threw the sickle upon the earth and the earth was harvested.*

¹⁸² Bij de Vaate and van Henten, "Jewish or Non-Jewish," 24.

¹⁸³ In the Masoretic Text, the prophet sees the curse written upon a flying scroll.

which will go out into the earth and come upon thieves and those who swear falsely using the Lord's name, bringing death. It will also enter the houses of these ones and destroy them. The curse in Zechariah and the curses on the tombs refer to theft.¹⁸⁴

The sickle, as a weapon of god's anger, is found in epitaphs. Again, it is in the context of tomb violation. Side B of an inscription reads:

[εἴ τις τι]να θάψετο, [χειρὶ] δολί[α] λάβοιτ[ο ἀπρ]οσδόκητον
ὀ[ποῖ]ον καὶ ὁ ἀδελφὸς α[ὐτ]ῶν Ἀμέριμνος· ἐὰν δέ τις αὐτῶν μὴ
φοβηθῆ τούτων τῶν κ[α]ταρῶν, τὸ ἀρᾶς δρέπανον εἰσέλθοι[το] εἰς
τὰς οἰκίσεις αὐτῶν καὶ μηδίναν ἐνκ[α]ταλείψετο¹⁸⁵

*[if someone] buried someone else, may he receive a treacherous
hand of the unexpected kind their brother Amerimnos
(received); and if ever someone of them is not afraid of these
imprecations, may the sickle of the curse enter into their houses
and leave no one behind.*

Side A of the inscription was done while Amerimnos was alive, side B after he was murdered.¹⁸⁶ The strong threat contained in this text likely reflects the extent of influence of the Jewish tradition.¹⁸⁷ The murder of Amerimnos was well known enough for the crime to form part of a curse formula.

A second such inscription invites the intervention of Theos Hypsistos, the highest god. The title Theos Hypsistos names a deity worshipped by pagans and only sometimes used as a name by Jews for the Jewish god, even more rarely as a Christian term. The evidence of Jews naming god as Theos Hypsistos declined as it increased among pagan usage.¹⁸⁸ This tendency over time by Jews indicates a desire to draw back and preserve the core group distinctive of the worship of only

¹⁸⁴ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 75.

¹⁸⁵ *IJO* 175; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 74; *MAMA* VI 316; Ramsay, *Cities and Bishoprics* 2, 565 nos 465-466.

¹⁸⁶ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 217 n. 69; Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 114.

¹⁸⁷ Strubbe, "Curses Against Violation of the Grave," 88 believes the text is Jewish.

¹⁸⁸ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 143-4.

their god. (See Fig. 1 centre of diagram, the place of core group distinction.)

[ἐὰν δέ τις ἕτερον σῶμα εἰσενέγκῃ, ἔσ]ται αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν τὸν ὑψιστον, καὶ τὸ ἀρᾶς δρέπανον εἰς τὸν ὕκον αὐτοῦ [εἰσέλθοιτο καὶ μηδένα ἐγκαταλείψαιτο]¹⁸⁹

[and if ever someone brings in a body] to that one will be before the highest god, and may the sickle of curse enter into his house and may it leave no one behind.

The inclusion of the ἀρᾶς δρέπανον increases the possibility that this is a Jewish inscription.¹⁹⁰ If this is the case, it shows that there was a corresponding terminology toward the highest god between both pagans and Jews. Naming of the highest god in the same terms provides evidence of acculturating practices between Jews and pagans. It also shows that within the space of acculturation between groups there was exchange of ideas and language referring to god. (See Fig. 2, yellow circle – acculturating space) Pagan followers of Theos Hypsistos were not always exclusively monotheistic.¹⁹¹ Followers moved in and out of the cultural mainstream. The exchange and interaction between Jews and pagans who acknowledged a highest god indicates that assimilation processes contributed to a cultural environment which supported expressions of a highest god between cultural groups.

2.8.5 The *rosalia*

The *rosalia* was a Roman custom of annually adorning a grave with roses. It is found across the Greek and Roman world. Italian settlers in

¹⁸⁹ *IJO* 176; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 74; Ramsay, *Cities and Bishoprics* 2, 652 no. 563.

¹⁹⁰ But see discussion in Paul Trebilco, “The Christian and Jewish Eumeneian Formula,” in *Negotiating Diaspora: Jewish Strategies in the Roman Empire*, Library of Second Temple Studies 45, J. M. G. Barclay ed., (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), 71-2, who determines that the inscription may be from either Jewish or Christian provenance.

¹⁹¹ Evidence for Theos Hypsistos is discussed fully in Chapter Seven.

Asia Minor practised the *rosalia* in their burials in addition to incorporating local customs such as curse formulae in epitaphs.¹⁹² Evidence of the *rosalia* is found on a grave of a Jewish woman in Akmonia,¹⁹³ and a pagan grave.¹⁹⁴ This is a further example from Akmonia of acculturation between Jews and pagans around burial practices. In the pagan example from the first century CE the archons of the city and secretary of the council were required to provide roses to the value of twelve denarii for the tomb of a certain Praxias, who had made a bequest. There was to be a grave banquet and distribution of money to certain people. The gods Theos Sebastos, Zeus Stodmenos, Asklepios Saviour and Artemis of Ephesos were invoked as overseers, witnesses and guards.¹⁹⁵

In the Jewish case from the third century CE Aurelius Aristeas dedicated a portion of land to the Neighbourhood of the First Gate, a burial association, along with gardening implements, in return for the adorning of roses upon the tomb of his wife Aurelia. Here, the justice of god is invoked, ἔσται αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὴν δικαιοσύνην τοῦ θεοῦ. This would have been more acceptable to the Jewish faith than an invocation to the pagan gods, as in the above pagan example.¹⁹⁶

Face A [Ἀυρ. Ἀ]ριστέας [Ἀπολ] | λωνίου ἡγόρα | σεν ἄργον τόπον |
παρὰ Μάρκου Μαθ | οῦ πῆ(χεων) ι' ἐπὶ ι' ἔτει.
*Aurelius Aristeas son of Apollonios purchased untilled
land from Markos Mathos ten cubits by ten cubits.*

(added in a later hand)

¹⁹² Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1, 189.

¹⁹³ *IJO* 171; Ramsay, *Cities and Bishoprics* 2, 562-4 nos. 455-7

¹⁹⁴ B. Laum, *Stiftungen in der griechischen und römischen Antike. Ein Beitrag zur antiken Kulturgeschichte*, Reprint 1964, (Aalen: Scientia, 2 no 173, 1914); F. Cumont, *Catalogue des sculptures et inscriptions antiques (monuments lapidaires) des musées royaux du cinquantenaire*, (Brussels: Vromant, 1913) 155. Cited in Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 81.

¹⁹⁵ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 220 n. 108 cites this text from B. Laum, *Stiftungen in der griechischen und römischen Antike. Ein Beitrag zur antiken Kulturgeschichte*, Vol. 2 Reprint 1964, (Aalen: Scientia, 1914), no. 173, and Vol. 1, 86.

¹⁹⁶ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 81.

Κατασκεύασαν τὰ τέκ|να αὐτοῦ Ἀλέξαν|δρος καὶ
Καλλίστρα|[τ]ος μητρὶ καὶ πατρὶ | μ. χ.
*His children Alexandros and Kallistratos prepared the
tomb for their father and mother.*

Face B ὑποσχόμενος τῆ | γειτοσύνη τῶν πρ[ω|τ]οφυλειτῶν
ἄρμ[ε]|να δίκ[λ]λα[τα] | δύο κ[ατ]ὰ μᾶ[να] | καὶ ἀ[γωρὸ]ν
ὀρυκ|τόν, ἔδωκεν | ἐφ' ᾧ κατὰ ἔτος ῥ[ο]|δίωσιν τὴν
σύμβ[ι]|όν μου Αὐρηλίαν.
*Holding it for the neighbourhood of the first gate he gave
monthly tools of two pronged hoes and digging
implements, upon condition they adorn with roses each
year (the grave of) my wife Aurelia*

Face C [εἰ]άν δὲ μὴ ἐθέλωσιν] ῥοδίσαι κατὰ ἔτος | [ἔσ]ται αὐτοῖς
πρὸς | τὴ]ν δικαιοσύ[ν|ην] τοῦ θεοῦ.¹⁹⁷
*If ever they do not mean to adorn (the grave) with roses
each year they will reckon with the justice of god.*

The *rosalia* is a ceremony of remembrance of the dead. Its usage was not restricted to one religious group or another. For Jews and Christians, the practice indicates moderate acculturation with the mainstream, as other common burial practices and trends. The Italian origin of the *rosalia* indicates some of the cultural influence of Romanisation in Asia.¹⁹⁸

According to the Jewish inscription, if this ceremony was not performed someone would have to 'reckon with the justice of god.'¹⁹⁹ Despite the presence in the New Testament of the phrase, ἡ δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ, the justice of god, Trebilco in his study of Jewish communities suggests that this is a Jewish usage of the phrase, not specifically Christian.²⁰⁰ Trebilco relies on Robert's assessment of the

¹⁹⁷ IJO 171; Ramsay, *Cities and Bishoprics* 2, 662-4 nos. 455-7.

¹⁹⁸ The impact of Romanisation on the cultural mainstream of Asia Minor is discussed in Chapter Four.

¹⁹⁹ [ἔσ]ται αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὴ]ν δικαιοσύ[ν|ην] τοῦ θεοῦ.

²⁰⁰ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 79. Ramsay, *Cities and Bishoprics* 2, 565 says Aristeas was Christian and that the bequest was left to a Christian benefit and burial society.

Christian phrase with this same intention known as the ‘Eumeneian formula’ – ἔσται αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, *he will have to reckon with god*.²⁰¹ The phrase the ‘Eumeneian formula’ is given from the large number of inscriptions found in the region of Eumeneia, Apameia, Hierapolis, Sebaste and the entire Upper Tembris Valley.²⁰² However, in a subsequent publication Trebilco revises his assessment of the Eumeneian formula and states that it is both Christian and Jewish.²⁰³

From Trebilco’s assessment, there is only one Christian inscription from Akmonia.²⁰⁴ This is disputed by Bij de Vaate and van Henten, who as indicated above, do not think the origin of inscriptions Trebilco has named Jewish as being conclusive.²⁰⁵

A final inscription from Akmonia is a small mutilated text.²⁰⁶ Underneath the text is carved a Jewish menorah.²⁰⁷ It is reasonable to presume from the presence of this symbol that one or more Jewish people made a gift to the city of an object, or some money for construction. It is a further example of the integration of the Jewish community in Akmonia with the city.

2.8.6 Summing up evidence of Jewish assimilation in Akmonia

²⁰¹ L. Robert, *Hellenica. Recueil d'épigraphie de numismatique et d'antiquités grecques*, Vols 11-12, (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1960b), 409-412. On the Eumeneian formula, see also W. M. Calder, “The Eumeneian Formula,” in *Anatolian Studies presented to W. H. Buckler*, (Manchester: 1939), 15.

²⁰² *MAMA* VII 37-38 on the distribution of the formula.

²⁰³ Trebilco, “Christian and Jewish Eumeneian Formula,” 66-88.

²⁰⁴ *MAMA* VI 336; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 218 n. 85 (that is, before Constantine).

²⁰⁵ Bij de Vaate and van Henten, “Jewish or Non-Jewish,” 19.

²⁰⁶ *IJO* 169; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 81; Ramsay, *Cities and Bishoprics* 2, 651 no. 561: ὑπὲρ εὐχῆ[ς] πάση τῇ πατρίδι – *on behalf of a prayer for the whole country*. Trebilco thinks the word πατρίς here could mean Jewish community at Akmonia, or more likely the city itself.

²⁰⁷ Bij de Vaate and van Henten, “Jewish or Non-Jewish,” 17 n. 8 on the simple equation of the presence of a menorah indicating a Jewish inscription.

Evidence of Jewish community activity in Akmonia is mostly inscriptional and mostly dates from the second and third centuries CE. The evidence indicates a vibrant Jewish community, well integrated into the city, and at least as the available evidence assembled by Trebilco suggests, moderately acculturated into the Hellenistic mainstream. I assess variable degrees of assimilation of Jews in Akmonia into the Hellenistic mainstream. There is maintenance of ethnic distinction, in addition to high integration and moderate to high acculturation. Mutual acculturation, where influential Jews have adopted pagan burial styles, and where pagans have taken up Jewish practices, is also notable.

The patronage of the synagogue by the wealthy Julia Severa, who was a member of an influential family, suggests that the Jewish community held a respected place within the city. The important Julia Severa inscription refers to renovations to the building. It indicates the synagogue was a significant building within the city. Julia's inscription provides evidence of material and social prosperity within the Jewish community. Two inscriptions attest to Jews holding prominent civic positions. This suggests respect of Jewish people by the city, and affirms that provision was made for exemption from pagan religious practices which interfered with core group distinctive values.

The extravagant tomb styles of prominent Jews reflect current pagan trends. They are an indicator of high upward mobility and the success of wealthy Jews within the city. Tomb styles and other symbolic decoration reflect degrees of acculturation. Moderate acculturation is indicated for Jews able to afford these tombs. There is no available evidence for less wealthy Jews in Akmonia.

Jewish people took up the Anatolian practice of writing curse formulae to prevent tomb violation. The inclusion of specific biblical references indicates Jewish group distinction in the city. These biblical references

were widely enough known that they were sometimes included in pagan burials.

2.9 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have set out the methodology used in this thesis. This method is based in a version of assimilation theory adapted to suit the ancient context of Asia Minor in the first three imperial centuries. The method may be applied to minority groups to assess their assimilation into mainstream Hellenistic culture. The model used in this study shows that there were spaces of interaction between a minority group and the mainstream. In these spaces acculturation happened.

Practices identified as acculturating involved the cultural aspects of a group which were distinctive from the mainstream. They included food, dress, language, social group membership, recreational activities and burial practices. In the same spaces integration of minority group individuals and whole groups took place. The integration of minority groups related to the structural processes of people as they engaged within their society. They included civic position, status within a wider community, membership in closed groups and engagement with civic services.

An assessment of the data of the acculturation and integration of minority groups gives indication of their mobility and success. From this, an estimate of the degree of assimilation may be made. The purpose of discerning the assimilation of a minority cultural group against the mainstream is to test if the interaction of groups that is the result of assimilation created a cultural environment that enabled the sharing of ideas and customs. In this thesis, I will determine if the sharing of ideas and customs extended to religion. Did the cultural environment that emerged from the assimilation of multiple groups provide a matrix for common expressions of a highest god?

In this chapter, the Jewish community of Akmonia provided a case to test the theory. An assessment of the assimilation of Jews in Akmonia made from the evidence assembled by Trebilco and Strubbe suggests that there was moderate acculturation of Jews and high integration. Noting the limitations of the evidence to those Jews of high civil standing, there was sharing of funerary practices and tomb styles between Jews and pagans. Jews were respected in the city and relationships were well established with high ranking families. The respect of the Jewish community by the city likely extends to toleration of the religious practices which made Jews distinct from mainstream pagans. Roman citizenship included these prominent Jews.

The case for the assimilation of Jews in Akmonia gives insight into a vibrant, diverse cultural environment which is representative of the milieu of Asia Minor in the first to the third centuries. It establishes a degree of assimilation which enabled full functioning of the Jewish community in the city as a distinct yet well respected group. The results of this case study suggest that the mutual sharing of ideas and customs between Jews from Akmonia and the mainstream enriched the cultural environment.

3. REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP

In the previous chapter I set out the strengths and challenges of using assimilation theory in studying different groups of people in the first three imperial centuries. In this chapter, I review the modern scholars who have worked in areas connected to this thesis and address where there are gaps. I have selected areas of scholarship within the body of research which have influenced the direction of this work. There are four main areas of research. These are: the cultural environment of Asia Minor; cultural change leading to a new religious situation; the religious attitudes and practices unique to Asia Minor; expressions of monotheism. These areas build on each other to explore the question of whether the cultural environment was a place of sufficient group interaction that expressions of monotheism arose outside of mainstream influence.

An important aspect of this thesis lies in presenting a view of the cultural environment. This lays the groundwork for the development of the ideas which follow. In building a view of the cultural environment I identify the importance of the cultural influences of Hellenisation and Romanisation in Asia Minor in the first three centuries. I engage with Greg Woolf's and Stephen Mitchell's expertise on the impact of Hellenisation and Romanisation in shaping the cultural environment. I then turn to the contribution of minority groups to the distinct features of the cultural environment. The use of an assimilation theory method highlights the place of minority groups. I identify Jewish communities as influential minority groups. As set out in the case study of the Jewish community in Akmonia, Paul Trebilco is an

authority on Jews as minority cultural groups in Asia Minor whom I engage.¹

After establishing a view of the cultural environment, I consider the cultural change in these centuries leading to a new religious situation. In this review of scholarship, I draw on John North's work on religious change. Within the changing religious situation, I identify the new role of the individual as significant and present Nicole Belayche's and John North's interpretations of the role of the individual.

Building on from the role of the individual, I develop a view of new religious attitudes and practices in Asia Minor. I have selected scholars who have researched the practices of public confession and expectation of divine justice as examples of religious change. Authorities include Nicole Belayche, Marijana Riel and Eckhard Schnabel. The phenomena of devotion to *angeloi* and abstract divinities contributes to the picture of religious change in the cultural environment. Belayche, Riel and Rangar Cline inform the subject of *angeloi* and abstract divinities in religion. I give special attention to the significant developments in pagan monotheism as part of religious change in the cultural environment. In this review of scholarship, I discuss the work of Stephen Mitchell on pagan monotheism.

Following an overview of modern scholarship in Asia Minor, I discuss scholarship in these areas and the subtopics named above. The perspectives of each area of research and each scholar inform and challenge the ideas expressed in this thesis.

¹ See case study of the assimilation of Jews in Akmonia in Chapter Two.

3.1 Modern scholarship in Asia Minor

Early modern scholarship in Asia Minor came first through travellers, whose interests were in the archaeological significance of the sights, especially in relation to the ‘seven churches of Asia Minor.’² These travellers drew pictures and maps, collated sites, made squeezes of inscriptions, collected coins, laid important groundwork for later people to follow.³

Robin Lane Fox’s broad-based study of the people, their gods, and their religious practices in Asia Minor forms an excellent introduction to pagan culture and the response to the rise of Christianity.⁴ His study is intended for a popular audience more than a scholarly however. This is evident in less precise referencing and in the broad areas of interests brought to the book. Lane Fox refers to several important topics which

² Referred to in the Book of Revelation: Ephesos, Smyrna, Pergamon, Thyateira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodikeia.

³ I here refer to and acknowledge the bibliographical compilation of early modern sources on Asia Minor by Alan Cadwallader in 2004 for a Greek reading group at Flinders University engaged in study of the Greek texts and archaeology of Kolossai. I also note the background to this work undertaken by Beth Prior and Michael Trainor at Flinders University. Some early explorers compiled in Cadwallader’s comprehensive bibliography include: Francis Vyvyan Jago Arundell, *A Visit to the Seven Churches of Asia; with an excursion into Pisidia, etc.* (London: John Rodwell, 1828) and *Discoveries in Asia Minor, including a description of the ruins of several ancient cities, and especially Antioch of Pisidia*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentely, 1834); Eugène Boré, *Correspondance et memoirs d’un voyageur en Orient*, (Paris: Olivier-Fulgence, 1848) and *Voyage en Turquie et en Perse*, Tome 1 (1854-55); William John Hamilton, *Researches into Asia Minor, Pontus and Armenia: with some account of their antiquities and geology*, 2 vols. (London, 1842); Philippe Le Bas, *Voyage archéologique en Grèce et en Asie Mineure fait par ordre du gouvernement français pendant les années 1843 et 1844 et publié... par P. Le Bas (et W. H. Waddington) avec la coopération d’E. Landron. (Itinéraire. pp. 1-40. – Inscriptions. tom. 1, 2. tom. 3. pt. 1. Explication des Inscriptions, tom. 3, pt. 1. – Planches, (Paris, 1847, etc. fol.) and Voyage archéologique en Grèce et en Asie Mineure sous la direction de M. P. Le Bas... 1824-1844. Planches... gravées d’après les dessins de E. Landron, publiées et commentées par S. Reinarch, pp. Xxiv. 162. (1888); W. H. Waddington, *Voyage et Asie Mineure au point de vue Numismatique*, (Paris: Bureau de la Revue Numismatique, 1853); Otter, *Voyage en Turquie et en Perse*, (Paris, 1748); Smith, *Survey of the Seven Churches of Asia*, (1678 245f. – according to J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistles of St. Paul: Colossians and Philemon*, (London: MacMillan, 1892), contains the earliest descriptions of cities in Phrygia.*

⁴ Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians in the Mediterranean World from the Second Century AD to the Conversion of Constantine*, (London: Penguin Books, 1986).

connect with this study, including the Oinoanda oracle⁵ and the manifestations of pagan monotheism.⁶

Lane Fox's work, in addition to Stephen Mitchell's grand work on these same topics, provide a window into the cultural environment.

Mitchell's early, and as he describes, his "benchmark publication,"⁷ *Anatolia: Land, Men and Gods in Asia Minor*, in two volumes, gives a mostly broad view of significant aspects of the development of the environment from the Celtic influence, to the rise of the Christian church.⁸ He is informative on indigenous groups in Asia Minor and their religious practices. He covers much ground, and is a good starting point for further study. Mitchell's encyclopaedic *Anatolia* volumes are helpful for identifying distinctive aspects of the cultural environment, which I take and develop. These aspects include: indigenous groups in their rural context, their cults and gods, the area of divine justice and practices of confession and penance.

The scholarship of Stephen Mitchell within Asia Minor is vast and comprehensive, spanning several decades. His use of primary sources, particularly epigraphy and archaeology, is particularly significant in establishing the period for contemporary readers. Mitchell has a familiarity with the environment which frequently assumes a level of knowledge which leaves a less informed reader behind. This is particularly the case in the subject area of pagan monotheism, in which he is a significant authority.

Mitchell's work on the wider cultural environment, indigenous groups, the impact of Hellenisation and Romanisation on Asia Minor in rural contexts, and pagan monotheism, is persuasive and influences the

⁵ Discussed in Chapter Eight.

⁶ Discussed in Chapter Six.

⁷ University of Exeter staff profile:

<https://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/classics/staff/mitchell/>

⁸ Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men and Gods in Asia Minor*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) vol. 1, *The Celts in Anatolia and the Impact of Roman Rule*, and vol. 2, *The Rise of the Church*.

research set out in this thesis. I build on Mitchell by cross examining texts from different cultural groups to support my presentation of the cultural environment as a matrix for common monotheistic expressions.

Another invaluable contribution to a study of the cultural environment of Asia Minor, with special emphasis on pagan life and pagan gods, comes from A. B. Cook.⁹ His massive work gives insight into the gods worshipped by pagans and provides an overview of pagan religiosity, including the topics of interest to this study, public confession and divine justice, and oracles. No study of the scholarship of Asia Minor would be complete without acknowledging the contribution of Louis Robert over many decades.¹⁰ Robert's wide-ranging expertise in history, epigraphy, numismatics and archaeology from the archaic Greek period to late antiquity has significantly influenced the scholarship of Asia Minor. His works are too many to cite here and will be referred to variously throughout this study. Another important figure in the modern scholarship of Asia Minor is William Ramsay. His *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia* is still an excellent resource which I have accessed through this study.¹¹

3.2 Hellenisation and Romanisation in Asia Minor

The impact of Hellenisation and Romanisation on Asia Minor has been well researched. The contribution of Greg Woolf to this area is valuable.¹² His expertise lies in presenting Roman culture as different than Greek, as having different foundational bases.¹³ Woolf's focus is

⁹ A. B. Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925) in three volumes. Volume 2 useful for Asia Minor.

¹⁰ 1930s – 1980s.

¹¹ Ramsay, *Cities and Bishoprics*.

¹² Greg Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek: Culture, Identity and the Civilising Process in the Roman East," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 40 (1994): 116-43.

¹³ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 118.

on Romanisation in Asian urban communities. This has informed my image of the urban cultural environment. Urban communities were those within the cultural environment which were most Hellenised.

Woolf divides his paper into four areas. The first is analysing what he interprets as a problem in definition and qualification of what Romanisation means, and particularly in relation to Greeks of the eastern part of the empire. The second is how the Romans saw their cultural and moral vocation to the Greeks, and how that was different from the barbarians. The third is that Greeks did not have the same understanding of material culture and collective ethnic identity as the Romans. The fourth is the nature of interaction between what Romans and what Greeks believed about all this.¹⁴ He suggests from these analyses that the Greeks preserved a separate sense of identity other than that assigned by Rome.

Woolf's research brings out the differences between Roman and Greek culture, the different values of each, and that the imposition of imperial authority on Asia did not destroy the embedded Hellenism of cities. He highlights the important distinction between Greek and Roman priorities placed on material things, and that this contributed to the maintenance of Hellenism in cities.¹⁵

Woolf examines architectural changes brought about by Roman rule and assesses that as these were incorporated into cities they affected daily habits (such as bathing, gymnastic exercises, attendance at gladiatorial games), but they did not essentially change the Hellenistic culture. He concludes that Hellenism was a dominant urban culture in Asia Minor, and that the imposition of Roman authority did not erode Hellenism. Political and economic changes were mostly structural,¹⁶

¹⁴ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 118.

¹⁵ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 131.

¹⁶ Which I interpret as the integration aspect of assimilation; that is, the changes refer to the necessary structural processes of living and functioning in cities together.

and these bypassed the core values of Hellenism. The title of his study, “Becoming Roman, Staying Greek” explains clearly his point, that Roman culture was present, that there were some advantages to it, but that taking it up did not mean losing one’s Hellenised identity.

Woolf’s study does not indicate a degree of impact on people such as Stephen Mitchell presents in an important work on Hellenisation and Romanisation in Asia Minor.¹⁷ Specifically Mitchell’s focus is on indigenous groups which mostly inhabited the rural environment. This differs from Woolf’s, which is directed at urban communities, with less emphasis on indigenous groups. Neither Woolf nor Mitchell consider Jews in these studies.

The differing conclusions of the degree of impact presented in both Woolf and Mitchell is likely to be caused by the different urban/rural contextual emphases of each scholar. This suggests that there was significant difference between urban and rural communities, which I affirm in my study.

Marijana Riel similarly identifies the distinction of rural environments, especially noting the place of sanctuaries as the foci of community, of rural administration, and of local justice.¹⁸ Riel complements this study and expands her scope of expertise by investigations into the prevalence of public confession in Asia Minor.¹⁹ In addition, she studies the prominent place of indigenous gods whose

¹⁷ Stephen Mitchell, “Ethnicity, Acculturation and Empire in Roman and Late Roman Asia Minor,” in Stephen Mitchell and Geoffrey Greatrix (eds), *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity* (London: Duckworth and the Classical Press of Wales, 2000), 117-150. This study is framed around questions of the self-identity of groups, the cultural and political influences on that self-identity, and the ethnic and cultural changes that happened in the regions. For the purposes of this study, it is the sections on the early Roman Empire in the age of Augustus, using Strabo’s *Geography* as a source, and the first three centuries of the empire that are informative. The later comments on the Christian empire between Constantine and Justinian move beyond the temporal parameters of this thesis.

¹⁸ Marijana Riel, “Society and Economy of Rural Sanctuaries in Roman Lydia and Phrygia,” *EA* 35 (2003): 77-102.

¹⁹ Marijana Riel, “CIG 4142 – A Forgotten Confession Inscription from North-West Phrygia,” *EA* 29 (1997): 35-43.

roles included the maintenance of justice.²⁰ The value of Ricl's work is the depth of details provided on topics which build my argument. Her detailed studies include many references to inscriptions as primary sources. These sources ground her assertions in primary evidence.

Ricl bases her studies in the geographically contained areas of north-western Phrygia and Lydia. From this region, she draws much data of the distinct religious practices of Asia Minor. In my study, this data can be linked with the development of pagan monotheism. Ricl's detailed analyses provide a good contrast to the broad studies in the wider cultural environment which form foundational information.²¹

Interest in local and indigenous traditions in studies of culture has increased over recent years.²² Greater attention on the local and indigenous in Asia Minor affirms Strelan's and Mitchell's work which highlights the prominent place of indigenous groups in the cultural environment. It also lends weight to Woolf's assessment of the distinctiveness of the culture of Asia Minor under Roman rule as opposed to the more Romanised environment of the western provinces.²³

Stephen Mitchell's study of Hellenisation and Romanisation centres on the ethnic identity of indigenous, mostly rural groups and how their identity was affected by first Hellenisation, then Romanisation. He

²⁰ Marijana Ricl, "Hosios kai Dikaios. Premiere Parte: Catalogue des Inscriptions," *EA* 18 (1991): 1-70; "Hosios kai Dikaios. Second Parte: Analyse," *EA* 19 (1992): 71-102.

²¹ In addition to Mitchell's *Anatolia* volumes, Lane Fox's study and A. B. Cook's *Zeus* volumes, can be added C. H. E. Haspels, *The Highlands of Phrygia: Sites and Monuments*, 2 volumes (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971); D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*, 2 volumes (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1950) as examples of good, broad base studies on the environment of Asia Minor which pick out key themes of distinction in religious practices which are discussed throughout this thesis.

²² Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 245. I discuss the influence of postcolonial methodology in Chapter Four.

²³ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 131. Woolf suggests that in the west Romanisation of culture was more transformative, while in the east it was permitted to stay Greek.

says like Woolf, that Hellenisation did not affect ethnic identification among indigenous groups.²⁴ Unlike Woolf's view that there was ongoing Hellenisation of the eastern empire,²⁵ Mitchell maintains that the imposition of Roman authority on rural communities did erode their ethnic identity.²⁶ This he says occurred through administrative changes that redefined traditional boundaries. Roman reorganisation overlooked cultural distinctions between groups. This had negative consequences for the indigenous communities affected.²⁷

Mitchell's perspective is useful in seeing how the regional ethnicity of indigenous groups became administratively organised under Roman governorship, and that the value of the ethnicity of the groups themselves was not a considering factor in the reorganisation. Mitchell emphasises that ethnic identification was different than the imposed allegiances of the dominant Roman system.²⁸ He expresses ethnicity as a regional belonging and Hellenism as a cultural overlay.²⁹ By overlooking Jewish groups in his study Mitchell restricts the application of 'ethnicity' and a fuller value of the term. Jewish ethnicity was not based on location, as the experience of Asia Minor Jews, isolated from ancestral Palestine, shows.

Mitchell suggests that pagan gods belonged solely to a place, or a group of people inhabiting a place as an ethnic group.³⁰ Whilst this may happen, especially where a locational factor, such as a mountain, cave or spring³¹ locate a cult, pagan gods and their cults were

²⁴ Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 127.

²⁵ Bearing in mind that Woolf's focus is urban whilst Mitchell's is rural, as indicated above. The distinction between urban and rural is noted as significant in this study.

²⁶ Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 117.

²⁷ Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 122. The division of indigenous groups by the Romans into assize districts took no account of previous group boundaries. Strabo *Geography* 13.4.12.

²⁸ Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 127.

²⁹ Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 127.

³⁰ Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 128-9.

³¹ The location of a mountain or cave provides a context for the cult activity of women followers of Dionysos in Asia. Indigenous mother cults also were identified with mountains.

susceptible to assimilation in the cultural environment as it changed. As groups of people moved, they took their gods with them.³² Migrating gods and cults were taken up in cities and country. They took on new epithets, they adapted and changed.³³ All this points to a capacity of the gods and their cults to assimilate into the environment in which they moved.

Rick Strelan's study on the persistence of indigenous language in a Hellenistic cultural environment is informative in any assessment of the degree of impact of Hellenisation and Romanisation on the cultural environment of Asia Minor.³⁴ His conclusion that indigenous language persisted in the presence of cultural Hellenism³⁵ affirms that distinct cultural groups did dissimilate from the mainstream culture. It also affirms that erosion of ethnic identity did not necessarily occur, as Mitchell indicates.³⁶ Strelan highlights that language was a tool for the retention of ethnic identity. He shows that within the geographical scope of his study³⁷ any presumption that Greek was a common first language must be overturned.³⁸ As I will establish however, language as an indicator of cultural assimilation must be taken alongside other factors, and not on its own.³⁹ Nonetheless, Strelan's insights strengthen the argument that indigenous cultural groups were

³² Robert Daniel Miller, "The Origin and Original Nature of Apollo," (Ph.D. diss., University of Philadelphia, 1939) follows the evidence of Apollo as a transformation of the representations of the god with his movement with different groups of people.

³³ Multiple examples on the assimilation of Hellenistic pagan gods with indigenous Anatolian gods are found in Asia Minor. Apollo Kareios at Hierapolis, Apollo Klarios at Klaros, Zeus Sabazios number among pagan gods with blended Hellenistic and indigenous names. See Cook, *Zeus*; Miller, "The Origin and Original Nature of Apollo;" Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1 and 2.

³⁴ Rick Strelan, "The Languages of the Lycus Valley."

³⁵ Strelan, "Languages of the Lycus Valley," 88, 101.

³⁶ Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 117.

³⁷ The Lykos Valley area of south-western Phrygia. This area incorporated the three important cities of Hierapolis, Kolossai and Laodikeia, plus many villages and rural communities.

³⁸ Strelan, "Languages of the Lycus Valley," 101: "Some of the traditional languages in the region survived, and for the majority in the Lycus Valley Greek was a second language."

³⁹ See Chapter Four.

independent and tenacious in the presence of both Roman and Greek cultural influence.

Modern scholars engaging with the impact of Hellenisation and Romanisation illustrate the distinctiveness of the cultural environment of Asia Minor. Woolf highlights the different values between Greek and Roman, and that these enabled the maintenance of Hellenism in cities. Mitchell determines that the regional ethnicity of indigenous groups suffered under Roman administrative organisation, but that ethnic identity was separate from imposed distinctions. Both Woolf and Mitchell determine that the processes of Hellenisation did not actively threaten the distinction of rural dwelling indigenous groups. The difference between city and country is noted in the work of all modern scholars drawing on ancient evidence. Riel emphasises the strength of rural communities and Strelan focusses on the preservation of indigenous culture through language retention.

3.3 Jewish minority cultural groups in Asia Minor

Whilst both Woolf and Mitchell exclude Jews from these studies, others have emphasised this important group in considering the impact of Hellenisation and Romanisation on ethnic distinction. On occasion Jews benefitted from Roman presence in Asia Minor rather than suffered from it, at least after the first century BCE when overall social conditions improved.⁴⁰

Mitchell's research focus is on the indigenous pagan groups in Sardis, which he says are reflected in the city foundation myths in third century CE inscriptions. Due to this focus he does not give attention to the significant and highly acculturated Jewish population in that

⁴⁰ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 8-12 on the privileges afforded Jewish communities in Asia Minor by Roman authority. Trebilco, 8 note 18 cites the letters written by local cities in opposition to Roman support of Jews: Josephus *Ant.* 14.186-267, 306-23, 16.160-78; Philo *Leg.* 311-16.

city.⁴¹ Although the scope of one article may be insufficient to include study of all cultural groups in the city, it would have been interesting to see how he considered Jews appropriated these foundation myths or otherwise. That would give further indication of the assimilation of Jews in Sardis.

Recognising a gap in the study of groups of people in the imperial period and a scholarly emphasis on conflict between pagans and Christians, Tessa Rajak, John North and Judith Lieu combine to introduce the role of Jewish people in the wider environment.⁴² These scholars draw attention to the place of Jews among groups adapting to a changing environment. I take a similar approach by attempting to redress an imbalance in the emphasis of Christian influence over minority indigenous pagan and Jewish groups. This means that I select indigenous pagan and Jewish sources alongside Christian sources to broaden the lens on the cultural environment in which many groups of people lived. This process proceeds from the methodology of assimilation theory, which works from the point of minority groups. In the first three imperial centuries minority groups included indigenous pagans, monotheistic pagans, Jews and Christians.

The presence of Jewish groups in the cultural environment in Asia Minor is significant for this study. Jews were a minority group, yet they were well integrated within Hellenistic city structures and acculturated to varying degrees with the mainstream. In addition, they maintained core group distinction. The case of Jewish communities in Asia Minor is an example of positive assimilation, in which a minority group is not undermined but has opportunities for mobility and success. The assimilation of Jewish communities builds the argument

⁴¹ Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 128 referring to Sardis.

⁴² Judith Lieu, John North and Tessa Rajak, *The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 2-3.

that the cultural environment was a matrix for diverse cultural expressions.

Extensive groundwork in the subject of Jewish studies has been undertaken by Emil Schürer.⁴³ It is from this foundational study that much subsequent scholarship has developed. Scholarship on Jewish communities in Asia Minor affirms that socially and economically successful Jews could enter politics, take up important civic roles, select pagan artistic themes for their tombs, and still be accepted as fully ethnic Jews.⁴⁴ It meant that Jewish youths could be part of the gymnasium.⁴⁵

No matter the degree of assimilation of a Jewish community, the overall character of Jews as they lived in Asia Minor was diversity of expression. This is shown through Paul Trebilco's work on Jewish groups in Asia Minor. His thorough study provides evidence of the Jewish response and adaptation to the Hellenistic mainstream culture. Trebilco's presentation of the diversity and distinction of Jewish communities is well made. Jews were not just 'mixed up' with pagans. Their assimilation was more complex than the term 'syncretism,' which Trebilco and others use, can encompass.⁴⁶ One way in which this present study diverges from Trebilco is in the use of the term syncretism to denote how cultures came together.

Trebilco presents the diverse expressions of Judaism in the study of communities of Jews in the cities of Sardis, Priene, Miletos, Akmonia and Apameia, through their archaeology and epigraphy. This is in

⁴³ Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*. Especially relevant to the area of Asia Minor is volume 3.

⁴⁴ There were successful, yet ethnically distinct Jews in Akmonia. See Chapter Two.

⁴⁵ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 260 notes 40, 41. Louis Robert, "Un corpus des inscriptions juives," *REJ* 101 (1937a): 85-6; *CIJ* 755.

⁴⁶ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 142. At 127 he refers again to syncretism and to scholarship which assumes syncretism among pagan cults, especially those of Theos Hypsistos and Sabazios. These he says were influenced by Judaism. See Chapter Seven and my discussion of the term 'syncretism,' including its datedness and interpretations which draw away from diversity of Jewish expression.

addition to his assessment of the literary sources which refer to Jewish communities from the introduction of Jews into Asia Minor to the patristic sources and others in between. A welcome section on Jewish women in Asia Minor lends some much-needed balance in scholarship. He also includes a study of the *theosebeis*. I have taken Trebilco's assessment of the *theosebeis* further in my argument as evidence of a group in which Jews and non-Jews together worshipped one highest god.⁴⁷

Trebilco names a frontier between Judaism and paganism.⁴⁸ Rather than being a barrier, the frontier was a space for assimilating edges, for creativity in relationship between Jews and pagans. The frontier existed in the boundary between a minority cultural group and the cultural mainstream in the model of assimilation theory I have designed. (See Fig. 2 yellow zone) Within this space the processes of acculturation and integration took place. Within such a frontier Trebilco posits there was a common vocabulary.⁴⁹ The suggestion of a common vocabulary assists my understanding that in the space of interaction between minority cultural groups and the mainstream (yellow zone), ideas of one highest god and practices directed toward a highest god developed. I have made use of Trebilco's comprehensive study to assess the assimilation of Jewish groups, their success, their mobility, and how they used these advantages to further the upward mobility and success of their people.⁵⁰

Initially I presumed things about Jewish groups which on closer examination have proven incorrect. I presumed their monotheism and the religious practices associated with it were the same between groups and between cities. I presumed that variant monotheistic

⁴⁷ See Chapter Seven.

⁴⁸ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 143.

⁴⁹ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 143.

⁵⁰ I chose the Jewish community at Akmonia as a case study of Jewish assimilation, building on evidence assembled by Trebilco and Strubbe and combining it with the methodology of assimilation theory to present conclusions.

practices among Jews did not represent the diversity of Jewish expression, but were Jews who were influenced by pagans and pagan monotheism.⁵¹ I presumed factors, which I have subsequently described as acculturative and integrative, eroded distinction and led to higher assimilation and loss of ethnic distinction. I have learned that the capacity of Jews to be highly acculturating and integrative enabled them to be successful people within a Hellenistic environment and that this did not mean the shedding of core group distinctions.

3.4 Cultural change and the individual in the ancient context of Asia Minor

The role of the individual in ancient society is newly proposed in cultural studies of the ancient world. Studies in the individual emerge from a shift from predominantly historical to cultural based approaches. This shift has been made through the social sciences. It is out of the field of social science that approaches such as social identity theory⁵² and assimilation theory arise.

Some of the earlier approaches of the social sciences are now well dated. Within a social science theory of interpretation of the ancient world such as that proposed by Bruce Malina,⁵³ the individual person was not self-assertive. Whilst much of the work of proponents of social science theories of the ancient world still holds, ideas on the lack of individual identity are being superseded. From a social science perspective such as Malina's, a person who expressed individual

⁵¹ This was indeed possible, but not exclusive.

⁵² Coleman A. Baker, "Social Identity Theory and Biblical Interpretation," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 42 no. 3 (2012): 129 refers to the emergence of social identity theory over the past two decades, and at 136, how the theory can be fruitfully combined with other theories in biblical interpretation. I can see that it would work helpfully alongside assimilation theory as a methodological tool in future studies.

⁵³ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, Third Edition, Revised and Expanded (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press). See also for example, Jerome Neyrey and Eric C. Stewart (eds.), *The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), especially the last section of the book on "modal personality."

identity risked exposing weakness and would lose honour in the sight of others.⁵⁴ As honour was upheld as the most important value, it was to be guarded above all things. Honour required a grant of reputation from others.⁵⁵ It was dependent on a community of interdependence.

In the contemporary world since the acceleration of social and other media people are encouraged to be themselves, to go their own way, to be an individual. Social structures are in place in first world countries such as Australia which enable financial and social independence from family and others. This was not the case a hundred years ago, and it was certainly not the case in the ancient Mediterranean world.

Then, people were formed from a world view of the collectivism.⁵⁶ In social science interpretational terms this means people reflected the phenomenon of a collectivistic, or dyadic personality. A dyadic or collectivistic personality was dependent on another for self-identity, for information fed back to the person from others.⁵⁷ Rather than having freedom to be an individual, the ancient person was embedded psychologically and socially in a group of significant others, and the means to differentiate oneself from the group and act individually was either not possible or certainly not easy.⁵⁸ This was reinforced in religion by its embeddedness within the structures of family and city.⁵⁹

However, the dependence of a person on a community of others does not negate the role of the individual in shaping culture and being instrumental in cultural and religious change. Social science interpretation has advanced significantly since scholars like Malina

⁵⁴ Malina, *New Testament World*, 59.

⁵⁵ Malina, *New Testament World*, 32.

⁵⁶ Malina, *New Testament World*, 62.

⁵⁷ Malina, *New Testament World*, 62.

⁵⁸ Malina, *New Testament World*, 62-3.

⁵⁹ See study by John North, "The Development of Religious Pluralism," in J. Lieu, J. North, T. Rajak (eds.), *The Jews Among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992): 174-93 on the appearance of traditional paganism.

introduced the concept of the dyadic personality in biblical interpretation.⁶⁰ Recent scholarship has expanded to include the role of the individual in the ancient context, and in the processes of change that brought about the new religious situation. The contribution of the volume edited by Jörg Rüpke has been valuable to this area.⁶¹ From within this edited study I have drawn from the work of Nicole Belayche⁶² and John North.⁶³ Previously, individual influence in the processes of tradition and change has been viewed as unremarkable.

Belayche identifies the expression of emotions in inscriptions to build her case for the place of the individual in Asia Minor.⁶⁴ She relates examples of emotional expression to the anxious era that preceded the establishment of Christianity.⁶⁵ Examples of personal emotional expression in Belayche's study include the formulae used by individuals on stone.⁶⁶ There were formulae for ways of naming god and gods that reflected personal religiosity and the self-image a person wanted to show outwardly to others.⁶⁷ Belayche provides examples of these things in the inscriptional evidence of devotion to *angeloi*, the *theion*, and local gods of justice.⁶⁸ These areas of religious practice give evidence of the practical response to a new and changing religious situation.

Belayche suggests that the abstract and different naming of these figures manifested a superior divinity, and that they enabled

⁶⁰ Malina first introduced this concept in his first 1981 edition of *New Testament World*.

⁶¹ Rüpke, *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean*.

⁶² Nicole Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric in Imperial Anatolia," in Rüpke, *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean*, 243-66. As Belayche frequently poses a different point of view than Mitchell, whom I have used extensively in this thesis, I have particularly sought her view on the key points of discussion throughout.

⁶³ John North, "Disguising Change in the First Century," in Rüpke, *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean*, 58-84.

⁶⁴ Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 246.

⁶⁵ Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 245.

⁶⁶ Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 246.

⁶⁷ Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 247.

⁶⁸ Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 247.

individuals to make sense of the divine action around them.⁶⁹ The *angeloi*, *theion* and practices of local divine justice represented a changing religious environment and the assimilative responses of individuals and groups of people to that movement. Belayche's study links a trend toward individualism as expressed epigraphically with the corpus of confession inscriptions in Phrygia and Lydia.⁷⁰ I build on this link and connect the confession inscriptions with *angeloi* and *theion* worship, both representative of the new religious situation, and with developments in pagan monotheism.

Belayche's study on the influence of the individual covers extensive ground. There is a high presumption that readers agree that the epigraphical expressions she discerns in the religious phenomena discussed really do reflect a trend of individualism.

I agree that there is individual expression in the confession texts. However, in my investigations of monotheism I have formulated a different understanding than Belayche's presentation of *angeloi*, *theion*, divine justice and confessional formulae as individual expressions coming from a polytheistic only system.⁷¹ Without discounting the capacity of polytheism to adapt to new religious situations and for individuals to influence polytheism, from my exploration of the religious phenomena of *angeloi* and *theion* devotion, divine justice and confessional expressions, clear monotheistic trends can be discerned. These I set out in Chapters Five and Six. I do not go as far as saying that these things are evidence of only monotheism. I have learned through the study of assimilation of cultural groups that there were large spaces in which crossover of practices and shared ideas took place. The edges between polytheism and monotheism were blurred to say the least.

⁶⁹ Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 260.

⁷⁰ Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 252.

⁷¹ Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 260.

John North's influential research into religious change in the Roman Empire engages with the role of the individual in the processes of change. North's early studies were in the development of new religious groups away from traditional, embedded pagan religion.⁷² North includes Jewish, Christian and pagan groups in his work. He suggests that religious change began with the movement toward differentiated religion. New religious groups provided choice and opportunity for commitment that had previously been irrelevant to monopolised pagan religion.⁷³ He provides a comprehensive overview of traditional pagan religion. Explaining how traditional paganism looked is a necessary base to establish before I introduce those things which caused religious change.⁷⁴ North presents traditional pagan religion as an embedded cultural phenomenon, unchanging, embracing family, social status and politics.⁷⁵

In his more recent study, North looks at how historical sources disguised the fact that change was happening in the cultural environment and individuals were part of the changes.⁷⁶ Change in the cultural environment shifted traditional power bases. It opened the way for engagement between individuals, minority groups and the mainstream. North proposes that individuals as well as the community contributed to religious change.

I affirm much of North's work on cultural change leading to a new religious situation, and the role of the individual in that change. The processes of assimilation provided space for the expression of

⁷² John A. North, "Religious Toleration in Republican Rome," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 25 (1979): 85-103, and "Development of Religious Pluralism," gives his view on religious change occurring through the development of new religious groups.

⁷³ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 178-9: "In these terms, change from embedded to differentiated religion might be described as a progress (if that is what it is) from monopoly to market." I discuss the religious marketplace further in Chapter Five.

⁷⁴ I set out the appearance of traditional pagan religion in Chapter Four.

⁷⁵ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 177.

⁷⁶ North, "Disguising Change."

individualism. Individuals made personal choices when they encountered new opportunities through group acculturation and integration.

North explains that there were limited opportunities for personal choice within traditional paganism.⁷⁷ He classifies individualisation as a process of moving away from behaviour defined by tradition, family, social group, state and culture.⁷⁸ Whilst North looks for evidence of the activity of individuals, he notes that conclusions may only be drawn from where the evidence indicates enough individuals have acted to represent patterns of change.⁷⁹ This method places his use of data within the field of the social sciences, which fits the methodology used in this study. North here makes an important methodological point, in which evidence must be put before assertion. This is an inductive approach to the subject area.⁸⁰

North's ideas on the role of the individual are informed by a different approach to the inscriptional and other material from that of Belayche. Whilst Belayche looks for signs of change related to the inclusion of the individual in the religious expressions mostly manifest in local indigenous cultic activity, North's perspective is less localised. North makes use of already established religious traditions to trace change. Both Belayche and North make extensive use of inscriptional evidence to test their suppositions. Belayche relies on texts related to confession practices, *angeloi* devotion and the rule of local justice, while North uses evidence of individual religious vows, gifts and dedications. North does assume to include the individual religious expressions of all social groups, including slaves.⁸¹

⁷⁷ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 178.

⁷⁸ North, "Disguising Change," 58.

⁷⁹ North, "Disguising Change," 58.

⁸⁰ See Chapter Six, section 6.3 on my interpretation of Larry Hurtado's inductive use of data, which I apply to my assessments of monotheism.

⁸¹ North, "Disguising Change," 77. I explain my departure from North's assumption that all groups would be represented in expressions of individualism in Chapter Five.

North does not discuss cult associations as places of commitment of members or of authority structure outside of the family and city. This leaves a gap in the evidence of Asia Minor where the local rule of divine justice was prevalent. Belayche's work enters this gap.⁸²

In summary, the role of the individual in ancient societies is newly emerging in scholarship. Individual influence challenges some of the core foundations of social science interpretations of the ancient world. North includes the individual in the processes of religious change brought about by the development of religious groups requiring conscious choice in membership and commitment to the new group. He also considers how traditional institutions disguised change. Belayche focusses her study on the individual in the religious expressions evident in inscriptions. She concentrates on the evidence of religious phenomena unique to Asia Minor, including divine abstractions and confessional formulae. My contribution to the influence of the individual in this study relates to the movement in religious attitudes and practices which manifested in monotheism.

3.5 The distinctive religious practices of Asia Minor

Scholarship in the areas described above give insight into the religious situation that developed through the first three imperial centuries. There is evidence of unique practices within the religious activities of groups in Asia Minor which expressed some common attitudes toward the divine. I now look at key scholarship in the areas of religious practices and religious phenomena in Asia Minor.

The areas of interest for this study include the practices of public confession, which were linked to the rule of divine justice, devotion to *angeloi*, *theion*, other abstractly named deities, and Theos Hypsistos,

⁸² Especially, Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," and "*Angeloi*."

as well as cult activity associated with the *theosebeis*, the god-worshippers. I discern in this thesis that these practices were connected through a common thread of monotheism. These practices found expression in Asia Minor, and they form part of the environment of the changing religious situation. The emergence of these practices in the cultural environment, through the new religious situation, builds a case to claim that the cultural environment was the matrix that enabled these monotheistic expressions.

3.5.1 Public confession and divine justice

Evidence of the practice of public confession is ubiquitous, particularly in Lydia and Phrygia, in the form of stone steles with texts recording the confessions.⁸³ They are a distinct representation of how people responded to the perceived presence and instruction of a god. The expression of humility characterises the confessions and points to the expectation that the god or gods involved knew everything and would administer and maintain justice.⁸⁴ From our modern perspective the offences, whether intentional or unintentional, against the god frequently seem insignificant and unworthy of divine attention, the punishments disproportionate in severity to the offence.⁸⁵ In many texts seemingly unrelated events are somehow connected to a perceived wrong doing on the part of the confessor. However, it is from the foundation of absolute dependence on the gods for their welfare in the present and for the future, and absolute faith that the god or gods

⁸³ Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 252.

⁸⁴ A. Thomas Kraabel, "Υψιστος and the Synagogue at Sardis," *GRBS* 10 (1969): 82 reports that worshippers viewed themselves as humble and insignificant before the gods.

⁸⁵ Riel, "CIG 4142 – A Forgotten Confession-Inscription from North-West Phrygia," *EA* 29 (1997): 38.

would enact justice if they were wronged, that the people practiced public confession.⁸⁶

The most useful resource is Georg Petzl's comprehensive contribution to the collation of the confession texts of western Asia Minor.⁸⁷ Whilst there are subsequent publications incorporating more recently found inscriptions, this remains the best source to date, with the best commentary.

The confession texts are a record of religious change. They were new, and were thus evidence of a new religious situation. Belayche takes the theme of individuality into the study of the confession texts. She suggests that whilst people might have responded to a command of a god to set up a stele recording their misdemeanour, they nonetheless used the public space of the stele as an opportunity to express their personal identity and piety to their communities.⁸⁸

Marijana Riel takes the confessions within the context of an industry which supported the local village and especially the sanctuary to which the god administering justice was attached.⁸⁹ In addition to the setting up of a stele, money, oaths, rituals, service in the sanctuary, and sometimes property, were required by the offender.⁹⁰ She lays out the process of confession, involving: transgression, punishment, confession, divine order to set up a stele.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Riel, "Society and Economy," 101; Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Divine Tyranny and Public Humiliation: A Suggestion for the Interpretation of the Lydian and Phrygian Confession Inscriptions," *NT* 45 (2003): 169.

⁸⁷ Georg Petzl, "Die Beichtinschriften Westkleinasiens," *EA* 22 (1994). See also Georg Petzl and Hasan Malay, "A New Confession Inscription from the Katakekaumene," *GRBS* 28 (1987): 459-72 as a contribution bringing insight and specific expertise into the study of a single text and its interrelatedness with the environment.

⁸⁸ Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 247.

⁸⁹ Riel, "Forgotten Confession-Inscription," 38.

⁹⁰ Riel, "Forgotten Confession-Inscription," 38.

⁹¹ Riel, "Forgotten Confession-Inscription," 39. See also Schnabel, "Divine Tyranny," 160.

Ricl's study gives a practical view of the confessional process. She is less concerned with the wider influence on religious trends and does not refer to assimilative processes with other cultural groups. She nonetheless notes that the confession texts relate to abstract expressions of gods, such as the *theion*, and *angeloi*, *Hosios* and *Dikaios*.⁹² I interpret the abstract divine expressions in confession texts and elsewhere as signs of a new vocabulary for a changing attitude toward the divine, and that these things provide evidence of a movement toward monotheism.⁹³

Ricl, as Belayche, emphasises the messenger function of these figures, that they served a higher deity.⁹⁴ Belayche says that the confessions themselves acknowledged the *δυνάμεις*, the powers, of the god,⁹⁵ which had perhaps been neglected in devotion, thus causing a transgression.

Schnabel's commentary on the confession texts similarly brings out the power of the god perceived by the local community, and the visual impact on the passer-by.⁹⁶ He, like Ricl, in his study is less interested in cultural cross interaction, more on the processes of confession. He does attempt to explain that the appearance of the confessions was the result of the spread of Christianity in the second and third centuries.⁹⁷ I am not convinced by his argument, as I think the new religious situation that was developing, of which the confession texts were a symptom, was a product of the presence new types of cults, new opportunities. Christianity was one new cult, one new opportunity.

⁹² Ricl, "Forgotten Confession-Inscription," 39-41.

⁹³ See discussion in Chapter Five.

⁹⁴ Ricl, "Forgotten Confession-Inscription," 38; Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 247.

⁹⁵ Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 250.

⁹⁶ Schnabel, "Divine Tyranny," 167-8, referring to a stele from Kollyda (Petzl, "Beichtinschriften," no. 6; *TAMV* I.213) inscribed upon which is the hope that the gods were propitiated through the public confession and erection of the stele, as far down as *διὰ τέκνα τέκνων, ἔγγον ἐγόνων* – *through the children of the children, the descendants of the descendants*. This powerful message indicates that the confession was intended to be public and permanent.

⁹⁷ Schnabel, "Divine Tyranny," 182 ff.

Schnabel thus appears to follow a tradition of explaining pagan phenomena which might otherwise be interpreted as innovative or even monotheistic, as related to the overwhelming impact of Christianity rather than independent movement.

Schnabel presents the confession texts as windows into the everyday lives of indigenous rural pagans.⁹⁸ Mitchell similarly emphasises this in his view of the confessions.⁹⁹ Schnabel pays close attention to the construction of the texts, the word for word descriptions, and posits interpretations. He brings out the specificity of offences recorded. Some of this detail is superfluous to this study. My concern is interpretation of the texts in the context of cultural assimilation with a view to discerning evidence of monotheistic practices.

Schnabel concludes that the steles were set up to humiliate an offender and draw attention to the power of the god.¹⁰⁰ I think the steles were more than a physical representation of humiliation. Posterity has powerful influence on a personal name, which those whose authored confessions would have been aware of through the visual imagery of other monuments and epigraphy around them. As Belayche has presented, the confession texts provided an opportunity for self-expression of image and personal religious ideas.¹⁰¹ Even Schnabel notes the presence of ‘serial steles.’¹⁰² I suggest that multiple steles for the one offence was a means of ensuring the community were aware of the people involved, that they obeyed the gods and were worthy of personal status.

In this study, I have worked directly with the confession texts more than secondary sources. Working with the primary sources has proven

⁹⁸ Schnabel, “Divine Tyranny,” 168.

⁹⁹ Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1, 191.

¹⁰⁰ Schnabel, “Divine Tyranny,” 178.

¹⁰¹ Belayche, “Individualization and Religious Rhetoric,” 247.

¹⁰² Schnabel, “Divine Tyranny,” 164-5. These are occurrences in which more than one stele is set up for the same offence. Schnabel says this happens when people felt under pressure from the severity of their god of justice.

to be the most fruitful in discerning why they manifested and how they contributed to the presence of the religious situation in Asia Minor.

3.5.2 *Angeloi* and abstract divinities in the religious environment

The idea of mediation between people and gods is related to the practice of public confession. As Belayche suggests, the gods of justice mediated the power of a superior divinity.¹⁰³ The *angeloi* served similar purposes. Their presence in the cultural environment was much more than the ‘angels’ we in the modern world immediately associate with Christian and Jewish religious context.

In this thesis, I understand the presence of *angeloi* in religious expression reflected a hierarchical interpretation of the universe. The figures inhabit the hierarchy but are not found in the superior place at the top of the hierarchy. I present a version of this universal construction through a platonic lens in Chapter Six. It is from examination of the structure of the universe as described in the platonic philosophy that I suggest the alignment of the religious practices discussed here.¹⁰⁴ I note that this is not the position of all scholars.¹⁰⁵

The abstractly named *angeloi* and the *theion* represent a new way of seeing god and gods, and new experiences of divine activity. They were products of the new religious situation in Asia Minor. Rhetorically they were the means of naming a superior divine power.¹⁰⁶ This means that they represented a highest god that was separated from the created world and did not communicate except via mediation.

¹⁰³ Belayche, “Individualization and Religious Rhetoric,” 250.

¹⁰⁴ Especially as the universe is presented in Plato *Timaios*.

¹⁰⁵ See especially my comments on Nicole Belayche, “*Angeloi* in Religious Practices of the Imperial Roman East,” *Henoah* 32 (2010): 44-65 and “Individualization and Religious Rhetoric,” in this section below.

¹⁰⁶ Belayche, “Individualization and Religious Rhetoric,” 260.

Scholarship in the subject of *angeloi* devotion usually includes the names of other abstract figures such as the *theion*, Hosios and Dikaaios, Theos Hypsistos and confession practices. These figures all involve mediation between levels of divinity. They were all part of the unique religious activities in Asia Minor that accompanied the new religious situation. In this study, I attempt to show that these practices were evidence of a changing environment in which many different groups interacted and exchanged ideas about god.

Much has been written about angels and *angeloi*. The prominence of angels in biblical texts reflects and often distorts this in a specific direction. I have focussed on pagan sources in discussion of *angeloi*. This focus assists the purpose of discerning expressions of a highest god that emerged from the cultural environment among different minority cultural groups.

From a non-biblical perspective, a significant starting point in *angeloi* research is from A. Sheppard, who compiles the pagan texts and offers interpretation on their meaning.¹⁰⁷ He does not draw out the religious meaning of the *angeloi*, although he does draw a formal connection with Judaism.¹⁰⁸ Sheppard focusses on the texts as they appear in Stratonikeia of Karia, where there is a cluster of evidence of the *angeloi*.

Belayche offers a view of the *angeloi* which challenges any assumption that devotion to them may represent pagan monotheism.¹⁰⁹ She argues that the phenomenon of *angeloi* devotion among pagans may be found

¹⁰⁷ A. R. R. Sheppard, "Pagan Cults of Angels in Roman Asia Minor," *Talanta* 12/13 (1980-81): 71-101.

¹⁰⁸ Sheppard, "Pagan Cults of Angels," 77.

¹⁰⁹ Belayche, "*Angeloi*," throughout the article. Sheppard, "Pagan Cults of Angels," 77 thinks similarly, naming pagan borrowing of the term *angeloi* without understanding of the monotheistic basis of Judaism.

within the structures of traditional pagan polytheistic practices.¹¹⁰ She begins from a base of working out how divine action is configured within the polytheistic framework.¹¹¹ In order to enter this dialogue I must demonstrate in this study that there is a case for pagan monotheism within the cultural environment. This is what I set out to do in Chapter Six.

Belayche critiques the role of scholarship shaped by the history of religions.¹¹² She says this has misinformed contemporary understanding of *angeloi* and other abstractions as anything other than impersonalised beings which represented the intervention of divine powers.¹¹³

Rangar Cline takes a similar position to Sheppard, studying the *angeloi* as they appear in the evidence rather than looking for religious influence.¹¹⁴ He concurs that the phenomenon of *angeloi* crosses religious traditions. This position aligns with my view on crossover between religious traditions. My point is that in the crossover, which takes place in the acculturating space between groups, monotheistic expression in a pagan context began to happen. The *angeloi* existed in these spaces. Cline uses evidence from all over the Roman Empire from the mid second to the mid fifth centuries. This makes his sweep of study much wider than the one intended here.

Cline's reference to the lesser status of the *angeloi* compared to the divinity whose power they manifested¹¹⁵ stands in contrast to

¹¹⁰ Belayche, "*Angeloi*," 46: "*A priori*, they do not show such a shift in the conception of the superior world that would call for an interpretative tool other than ritualistic polytheism."

¹¹¹ Belayche, "*Angeloi*," 62.

¹¹² Belayche, "*Angeloi*," 45. Her example of a history of religions type of assessment of the occurrence and role of *angeloi* is Franz Cumont, *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain* (Paris: P. Guethner, 1906 [1929⁴]); "Les anges du paganisme," *RHR* 62 (1915): 159-182.

¹¹³ Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 259-60.

¹¹⁴ Rangar Cline, *Ancient Angels: Conceptualizing Angeloi in the Roman Empire*, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), xvii.

¹¹⁵ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 4.

Belayche's position on the status of *angeloi*.¹¹⁶ Ricl similarly places the θεῖω ἀγγελικῶ, the angelic divine, as inferior,¹¹⁷ which Belayche critiques.¹¹⁸ She prefers to interpret the expressions and combinations of the *theion* as indicating a superior world "in its otherness, great and adorned with all qualities when humans experience it in their world."¹¹⁹ The messenger of divine status is the *angelos*. The divine nature itself is *theion*.

Belayche does not see either the *angeloi* or other abstract agents as inferior.¹²⁰ Rather she interprets them as divine or semi-divine beings which manifested a supreme god, or were in its service. She describes her study as relating to the ontology of the divine figures, that their nature as supernatural powers, and the abstract expression (*theion*) and imagery (*angeloi*), were a way to speak of divine intervention in the world.¹²¹

Mediation was a role the *angeloi* and other abstract divinities fulfilled. Cline uses the Stratonikeia evidence to show that the *angelos* there only served as a messenger.¹²² He offers a different interpretation to Belayche.

Mediation was an inevitable action in a hierarchically constructed universe based on Plato's modelling. In this model, a superior divinity was remote and inaccessible to the human world. Whilst mediation was a necessary fact of a universe constructed this way, in order that there may be communication and access, the evidence of *angeloi* functioning as messengers was uncommon.¹²³ Belayche says this is

¹¹⁶ Belayche, "Angeloi," 59.

¹¹⁷ Ricl, "A Forgotten Confession Inscription," 40-4.

¹¹⁸ Belayche, "Angeloi," 59.

¹¹⁹ Belayche, "Angeloi," 59.

¹²⁰ Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric," 259-60.

¹²¹ Belayche, "Angeloi," 47.

¹²² Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 60.

¹²³ Belayche, "Angeloi," 55-6. There are only two textual references to communication via *angelos* in the confessions. These can be found in Petzl, "Beichtinschriften," nos. 3, 38. Belayche says regarding the fact that there are only two examples of *angeloi* in

because any pagan god can act in the role of a messenger without losing status.¹²⁴ If so, it indicates that pagan gods were multifunctional in a way that perhaps people did not perceive the Jewish and Christian god. This means it is Belayche's understanding of the multifunctionality of pagan gods which causes her to say that the pagan *angeloi* operated in a polytheistic environment.

In summary, Belayche introduces a change in the usual equivalence between *angelos* and *theion*.¹²⁵ Neither *angelos* nor *theion* were subordinate to a remote higher divinity. She describes them as modalities of the intervention of supernatural powers upon the world, expressed through a personalised form.¹²⁶ Her position is that *angelos* and *theion* were divine power manifesting through various modalities.¹²⁷ If this is so, she says the angelic figures should not form part of any construction of a cosmic hierarchy. *Angeloi* inhabiting a cosmic hierarchy is a common modern understanding which according to Belayche, is influenced by the usual inherited interpretation of angels which she has sought to dismantle in this paper.

Belayche's expertise has been helpful in clarifying where my understanding agrees with and departs from her understanding of the function of *angeloi* and the other abstract divine agents. I discern from her insights that I cannot presume pagan monotheism as a given in Asia Minor. I must first establish that the cultural environment did function as an enabling matrix for monotheism before I can argue that devotion to *angeloi* and *theion* and Theos Hypsistos were expressions of a monotheistic understanding of god.

the corpus of confession texts that: "the awareness of the existence of a mediator in the course of divine interventions was not a common pattern, even in a context of glorification of the deities and their powers."

¹²⁴ Belayche, "Individualization and Religious Rhetoric,' 251-2.

¹²⁵ Belayche, "*Angeloi*," 65.

¹²⁶ Belayche, "*Angloi*," 65.

¹²⁷ Belayche, "*Angeloi*," 65 note 290 citing *CMRDM* 1 no. 85; *TAMV* 1 (1981) no. 186; Haspels, *Highlands of Phrygia*, 337, no. 104.

I am also challenged by Belayche's view that people outside of the intellectual elite of the time did not conceive of a hierarchical construction of the universe into which the *angeloi* were placed. It is this non-platonic view of the universe, which I interpret as having no space for division between higher and lesser divinities, that leads Belayche to say that *angeloi*, *theion* and other abstractions were equally divine in status.

3.6 Pagan monotheism

The topic of pagan monotheism is vast. There have been many different interpretations of the religious practices I present in this thesis as evidence of pagan monotheism. Scholarship in pagan monotheism covers studies about the legitimacy of naming pagan monotheism as a religious category reflective of the cultural environment of Asia Minor.¹²⁸ It also includes Jewish monotheism at the edges, especially the phenomenon of the *theosebeis*, or god-worshippers,¹²⁹ and cultic evidence of worship of one highest god, Theos Hypsistos.¹³⁰ These religious expressions interacted with traditional pagan religion, Christianity and Judaism.

I have elected not to enter arguments about naming types of pagan monotheism. This is so I do not overload the topic with detail which detracts from the purpose of uncovering the cultural environment of

¹²⁸ I especially note the contributions to Athanassiadi and Frede, *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, and Mitchell and Van Nuffelen, *One God*.

¹²⁹ Discussions on the *theosebeis* can be found in Angelos Chaniotis, "The Jews of Aphrodisias: New Evidence and an Old Problem," *SCI* 21 (2002): 209-42; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 145-64; Louis H. Feldman, "The Omnipresence of the God-Fearers," *BAR* 12/2 (1986): 58-63 and "Proselytes and Sympathizers in the Light of the New Inscriptions from Aphrodisias," *REJ* 148/3-4 (1989): 265-305; Joyce Reynolds and Robert Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers at Aphrodisias: Greek Inscriptions with Commentary*, Texts from the Excavations Conducted at Aphrodisias by Kenan T. Erim, The Cambridge Philological Society, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹³⁰ For scholarship on Theos Hypsistos, see below discussion of Stephen Mitchell's works.

Asia and determining if it did support the different types of monotheism. I begin from a working basis that pagan monotheism did exist and may legitimately be named as such.¹³¹ I do however, acknowledge that this is not uniformly accepted. I have attempted to include the work of scholars with alternative views than those I present on the topic of pagan monotheism.¹³²

The scholarly discussion on language for defining what is monotheism, and what type of adjective suitably applies in a particular context is extensive. Scholars have applied a large amount of detail in this area.¹³³ I give a brief overview, preferring not to be tied down by restrictive terminology. I offer the general term, ‘pagan monotheism’ to cover monotheistic attitude and expression in cult and theology that differs from traditional pagan religion.

Stephen Mitchell’s scholarship in the subject of pagan monotheism is authoritative and informs much of the research I have gathered here. Mitchell directed a research project on pagan monotheism at the University of Exeter from 2004 to 2007. One of the products of this project was an international conference in 2006.¹³⁴ Another was the production of a volume of articles which have been useful in preparing

¹³¹ I say this was the case even in the period before Christianity became the mainstream religious tradition. I base my assertions on the weight of evidence which I have accessed in this study and which contributes to this presentation of the wider cultural environment.

¹³² Such as Nicole Belyache. See Chapter Seven.

¹³³ Examples include: Angelos Chaniotis, “Megatheism: the search for the almighty god and the competition of cults,” in Mitchell and Van Nuffelen, *One God*, 113; H. S. Versnel, “Thrice One: Three Greek Experiments in Oneness,” in B. Nevling Porter (ed.), *One God or Many?* (Transactions of the Casco Bay Assyriological Institute, Vol. 1, 2000), 86-7; Peter Van Nuffelen, “Pagan monotheism as a religious phenomenon,” in Mitchell and Van Nuffelen, *One God*, 17.

¹³⁴ The conference proceedings have previously been available at www.huss.ex.ac.uk/classics/conferences/pagan_monotheism/home.html However at the time of writing this the site was no longer accessible.

this work.¹³⁵ Mitchell's volume builds on work which was previously undertaken and produced in 1999.¹³⁶

Mitchell's main area of expertise within the field of pagan monotheism is in the study of evidence of Theos Hypsistos. Mitchell bases his work on epigraphical evidence and archaeological monuments. Mitchell's comprehensive 1999¹³⁷ and updated 2010¹³⁸ catalogues of inscriptions for cults of Theos Hypsistos illustrate his use of epigraphy to substantiate his claims for pagan monotheism. I have found in these works that Mitchell presumes pagan monotheism as a fact, and that readers are familiar with it. This leads to some gaps which the reader is left to fill, especially if the earlier *Anatolia* volumes are not known. In the *Anatolia* volumes Mitchell lays much groundwork in the religious environment, particularly in the areas of indigenous rural cults, confession practices, divine justice, and the reference to abstract deities. These areas inform the occurrences of pagan monotheism.

Mitchell uses the example of the theological oracle from Oinoanda which I study in Chapter Nine, in several of his works.¹³⁹ He describes the oracle as a monotheistic text deriving from a cultic context of Theos Hypsistos. This context appears to be correct, judging from other inscriptions found in the same area.¹⁴⁰ Mitchell claims that the cult of Theos Hypsistos provides evidence of a trend in the second and third

¹³⁵ Mitchell and Van Nuffelen, *One God*. Within this work the editors note the contribution and leadership in the field of pagan monotheism by Michael Frede.

¹³⁶ Athanassiadi and Frede, *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*. Some of this work lies outside of this thesis range and relates to the period in which pagan monotheism became more recognised as a resistance to the dominance of Christianity. I discuss this in Chapter Six.

¹³⁷ Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos." Catalogue of inscriptions at 128-47.

¹³⁸ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos." Catalogue of inscriptions at 198-208.

¹³⁹ Especially of relevance to this work, is "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," and "Inscriptions from Melli (Kocaaliler) in Pisidia," *AS* 53 (2003): 139-59.

¹⁴⁰ *CIG* 4380n²; A. S. Hall, "The Klarian Oracle at Oenoanda," *ZPE* 32 (1978): 265. The Chromatis inscription, discussed in Chapter Eight, is the votive dedication of one woman to Theos Hypsistos. Further contextual evidence of Theos Hypsistos and the Oinoanda oracle has been more recently found: "The Oinoanda Report," *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut* (2008).

centuries CE to worship a single god, remote from the world and abstract in identification.¹⁴¹ He contrasts this trend to concurrent worship of the anthropomorphic gods of conventional paganism. This validates North's proposal that there was religious change in the cultural environment.¹⁴² Mitchell also provides evidence of cults of Theos Hypsistos dating back to the Hellenistic period. He suggests they were likely part of the indigenous Anatolian religious tradition.¹⁴³ As appealing as this suggestion is, I suggest there is insufficient evidence to carry this claim.

Mitchell was subject to significant critique of some claims made in his 1999 article on Theos Hypsistos.¹⁴⁴ This critique he acknowledged and attempted to redress in his 2010 work. This is notable in the way he discusses evidence of Zeus Hypsistos as separate from the rest of the *hypsistos* corpus.¹⁴⁵ In the earlier study Mitchell grouped together Zeus Hypsistos and Theos Hypsistos. In Chapter Seven I discuss the distinct difference in religious expression between Zeus Hypsistos and Theos Hypsistos devotion. In his 2010 study Mitchell recognises the closer connection of Zeus Hypsistos cults with mainstream paganism.¹⁴⁶

An area of divergence among scholars interested in the religious phenomena of Asia Minor is whether Theos Hypsistos referred to only one god, or whether any god who was considered highest at the time and in a certain circumstance, could be called Theos Hypsistos.¹⁴⁷ It

¹⁴¹ Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 92.

¹⁴² North expounds the idea of religious change in, "Development of Religious Pluralism," and "Disguising Change."

¹⁴³ Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 109.

¹⁴⁴ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 168. Critique included that he treated cults of Theos Hypsistos like any other pagan cult, and that the phenomenon of Theos Hypsistos worship could be described as a unity of expression.

¹⁴⁵ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 171.

¹⁴⁶ Particularly with the Macedonian examples. It is less clear at Stratonikeia.

¹⁴⁷ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 169 addresses this question. He notes disagreement with N. Belayche, "Hypsistos: une voie de

seems there is evidence that Theos Hypsistos was one god worshipped in cult,¹⁴⁸ and also that it was a name for gods used out of deference in a certain context.¹⁴⁹ There is also evidence of Theos Hypsistos usage with Judaism.¹⁵⁰ Theos Hypsistos dedications in Jewish and pagan contexts provides evidence of acculturation. The effects of acculturation can be seen in inscriptions in which it is difficult to decide if the dedication to Theos Hypsistos is pagan or Jewish.¹⁵¹

Mitchell alludes to assimilative processes, but like Trebilco, Levine and others, does not use the terminology of assimilation theory to describe the interaction of cultural groups.¹⁵² Mitchell tends toward sweeping statements concerning evidence of Theos Hypsistos, and in other broad cultural and religious areas. He says that the Greek and Roman worlds shared common religious ideas, that these were part of their shared culture.¹⁵³ My research question challenges me to think that the cultural environment was more complex than absolute statements can contain. I am attentive to the wider research into the cultural environment, particularly by points made by North, Belayche, Strelan and Trebilco which I have discussed in this chapter. The combined research areas of these scholars have highlighted that there was not a uniform culture across the ancient world. Minority groups especially,

l'exaltation des dieux dans le polythéisme gréco-romain," in *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 7 (2005a): 40.

¹⁴⁸ As Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 170 claims.

¹⁴⁹ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 132 writes: "that a number of different gods were thought of as the Supreme deity or the 'Highest god,' quite independently of Jewish influence." He says that Hypsistos was a vague reference, with the exact deity uncertain to anyone other than the dedicant.

¹⁵⁰ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 127-44 on Theos Hypsistos and Judaism. See also A. Thomas Kraabel, "Υψιστος," 81-93 and subsequent publications on the excavations at Sardis. *CIG* 769 from Akmonia in the context of the sickle curse from the LXX. See case study of the Jewish community at Akmonia in Chapter Two.

¹⁵¹ Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 112-13 uses examples of a curse formula on a tombstone from Akmonia to highlight the difficulty in determining which context a dedication to Theos Hypsistos came from. See Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 74-5; Ramsay, *Cities and Bishoprics*, 652 no. 563; *CIG* 769.

¹⁵² Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 169-70.

¹⁵³ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 169.

emphasised differing and distinct religious ideas, differing cultural patterns from mainstream Hellenism.

3.7 Summary of scholarship

In this chapter, I have given a brief overview of modern scholarship in key areas connected with the thesis question. In Asia Minor are expressions of a highest god found beyond mainstream culture, in minority group contexts? If so, does the cultural environment itself provide the means, the matrix, for this to happen? Areas which prepare the groundwork for answering this include: broader studies in the cultural environment of Asia Minor, more detailed examination of minority cultural groups, the changing religious situation, and the religious practices emerging from this environment. The areas mentioned above are large. In this review of scholarship, I have engaged in subtopics to channel the field of research effectively and draw out key themes. These themes are elucidated through the study of Hellenisation and Romanisation, minority group influence, the role of the individual in effecting change, and distinctive religious practices which can be linked with monotheism. The subtopics are intended to contain the study and rationalise the material contained in the thesis chapters.

Within these key areas and the subtopics within the areas, I have engaged Stephen Mitchell and Greg Woolf in Hellenisation and Romanisation, Paul Trebilco in Jewish minority groups, Nicole Belayche and John North in the changing religious situation and the role of the individual. Belayche, Riel and Mitchell, among others, have both challenged and assisted in analysing the range of religious practices, including versions of monotheism, distinctive to the religious situation and the vibrant cultural environment of Asia Minor.

These scholars are among those who have built a significant body of knowledge in the areas mentioned above. My question fits into a newer emphasis in scholarship on the ancient social and cultural context of Asia Minor. The research contained in these pages enters a gap between traditional historical and archaeological approaches and the social sciences and cultural anthropology.

4. THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF ASIA MINOR

The cultural environment of Asia Minor was made up of human beings as distinct groups and as individuals. This environment was formed by the relationships of people and their interactions and influences in the communities and wider societies in which they lived. In this chapter, I describe the cultural environment of Asia Minor in the first to the third centuries CE. The cultural environment is the context for setting the thesis question. I am looking to discover how people in different groups approached god beyond the margins of mainstream culture and in traditional settings.

I focus on two main groups in this chapter; indigenous, mainly rural groups, and urban cultural groups. There are sufficient differences between city and country to consider these groups separately, the factors of Hellenisation and Romanisation affected both urban and rural groups. I discuss the impact of Hellenisation and Romanisation here, along with language usage, the imperial cult, and minority group ethnic distinction. These factors influenced the interaction of rural and urban groups with each other and with the cultural mainstream and contributed to the distinct environment of Asia Minor.

The findings of this chapter suggest that the cultural environment supported a changing religious situation. The findings prepare the way for discussion in the following chapter on cultural change and a religious context in which monotheistic expressions of god arose.

4.1 Cultural groups inhabiting Asia Minor

The cultural groups inhabiting Asia Minor are the human context for this study. The human context is the space in which culture developed. The word 'culture' incorporates the human aspects of the environment, including the social, religious, political, economic and intellectual. As anthropologist Edward Tylor wrote as far back as 1871, culture is all "knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man (*sic*) as a member of society."¹ This meaning has stayed constant in modern history.² All the aspects of culture interact with each other in the environment. Not one aspect of culture operates in isolation. This means that the assimilation processes studied as part of this thesis were complex phenomena which incorporated multiple aspects of culture.

As assessed in Chapter Two, the cultural mainstream of Asia Minor in the first three imperial centuries was Hellenism, and Hellenism was mostly found in urban contexts.³ The cultural processes of Hellenism are described as Hellenisation. Within urban Hellenisation people expressed significant degrees of Graeco-Roman acculturation. Different cultural and ethnic groups existed both within and outside of, and interacted with, the Hellenistic cultural mainstream. Collectively these groups made up the human cultural environment. Rural indigenous groups and urban cultural groups inhabited Asia Minor and these interacted with mainstream Hellenism through processes of assimilation, creating a diverse, distinctive Asian environment in the imperial era.

¹ Quoted in Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods, Practice* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1991), 9.

² The *Macquarie Australian Dictionary* describes culture as: "the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings, which is transmitted from one generation to another." This modern definition shows the general meaning of culture remains unchanged.

³ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 88.

In addition to the many indigenous groups in western Asia Minor, migrating peoples also numbered among the diverse inhabitants: Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Syrians, Persians, among others. Each group had customs and religious practices which made them distinct. Within the environment of Asia Minor Jews existed as ethnically distinct through religious and social practices. Christians also grew into cultural groups from the first century CE. Christian groups had much in common with Judaism. They shared a religious background, and relationships between Jews and Christians were complex and interconnected in the first three imperial centuries.⁴ When Christian communities formed they were not ethnically distinct, which differed from Jewish groups. Members of Christian communities came from different ethnic and social backgrounds.⁵

Following is a discussion of indigenous and urban groups and an assessment of their assimilation.

4.2 Indigenous cultural groups

Indigenous cultural groups are those which originated in Anatolia⁶ and exhibited the ethnic characteristics of a region. They stood apart from mainstream Hellenistic groups which grew up in, or were transformed by, Greek culture. For the purposes of this study I refer to indigenous groups as those which were present before Hellenisation of the cultural mainstream. If Hellenisation began to take place after the movement

⁴ See for example, Paula Fredriksen, "Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel," *NTS* 56 (2010): 232-52 on the interwoven relationships between Jews and early Christians.

⁵ I discuss Christian communities in Chapter Nine.

⁶ Anatolia is a name used of the area of Asia Minor which by 450 BCE and the Hellenisation of the cultural mainstream, was made up of: Lydia, Lykia, Karia, Mysia, Bithynia, Phrygia, Galatia, Lykaonia, Pisidia, Paphlagonia, Cilicia and Cappadocia. In Roman times, the area became various provinces, of which Asia was one.

of Alexander (d.323 BCE) then indigenous groups were all those present before the middle of the fourth century BCE.⁷

Indigenous groups were mainly found away from major Hellenistic urban centres.⁸ Even so, through the business of trade, travel, commerce and employment, contact between indigenous people and urban dwellers occurred leading to degrees of assimilation.⁹ The cities and villages along important trade routes in Asia Minor were culturally diverse.¹⁰ The proximity of Asia Minor in the east to the frontiers of the Roman Empire meant there was contact with and passage through Asia of a diversity of racial and cultural groups. As North suggests, the eastern empire contained, “complex populations of diverse ethnic origins.”¹¹ Although indigenous gods tended to be regional,¹² they could become fashionable in cities.¹³ Indigenous groups

⁷ This designation must be flexible. I doubt any claim that the Jewish people and their god were indigenous to Asia Minor will receive much credit, yet if there were Jewish settlers living in Asia Minor prior to Alexander it is likely they would have considered themselves native to the region they inhabited, not to Palestine, even if ethnically connected to their ancestors in Palestine.

⁸ Noting Riel, “Society and Economy,” 79, that differences between villages and urban centres were not always clearly defined.

⁹ Strelan’s study, “The Languages of the Lycus Valley,” on the use of Greek as a second language as part of trade interactions attests to variable assimilation among rural groups.

¹⁰ On the interactions of rural indigenous groups and towns and cities see for example, Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1 and 2; Strelan, “Languages of the Lycus Valley,” 86 on the trade and business dealings. See also Ulrich Huttner, *Early Christianity in the Lycus Valley*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 20-23 on primary business and trade in the valley.

¹¹ North, “Development of Religious Pluralism,” 180-81.

¹² Mitchell, “Ethnicity,” 128-9 suggests that pagan gods were identified by place or group of people inhabiting a region. Thus the indigenous names of a god such as Mēn included place names such as Μῆν Ἀξιότινος, Mēn of Axiotta. The prominent place of sanctuaries within rural communities affirms the tendency of regionality and indigenous gods. See Riel, “Society and Economy.”

¹³ For example, cults of the indigenous mother god would sometimes become fashionable in cities. Cults of these local deities were open to adaptation and Hellenisation, including the loss of her original names. In Asia, the incorporation of the mother god into cities resulted in her indigenous names receding and through assimilation taking on the identity of Athene. S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Cult in Imperial Asia Minor*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 97 refers to the indigenous Mētēr Zizimmene who migrated into Ikonium and took the name Minerva/Athene Zizimmene – *IGR*^{III} 1471; *JHS* 38 (1918): 170-2. See Mitchell, *Anatolia* 2, 18 citing W. Ramsay, *JHS* 38 (1918): 107ff. Another example is the Ephesian Artemis, whose iconography reflects a fertility figure based on indigenous mother forms rather than the austere hunter of Graeco-Roman religion.

followed many gods.¹⁴ Name, location and cult attributes differentiated deities indigenous to Asia Minor. The fusion of gods and cults which was part of the process of Hellenisation complicated the identification of gods. Stephen Mitchell summarises four groups of cults which made up the indigenous religious environment of ancient Anatolia: cults of Zeus, of the various mother gods, of Mēn, and the gods of justice and vengeance.¹⁵ All these groups were found in Phrygia, most of Lydia, Mysia, Bithynia, Galatia, Lykaonia and northern Pisidia.

Indigenous ethnic groups were spread across Anatolia. An ethnic group is a minority group within a larger or dominant cultural group which has a common cultural tradition. Indigenous Anatolian groups were closely related to their religious cults, and rural communities were mostly centred around a local sanctuary.¹⁶ Riel describes the place of the sanctuary for indigenous groups as, “not only a simple place of cult but a pre-state ethnological entity founded on a patrimonial base.”¹⁷ From this description, indigenous groups might be considered as deriving ethnic identity from the place of the sanctuary. Distinction of indigenous groups is more notable through ethnicity than by cult identification. This is because people could belong to multiple cults, and more than one god could inhabit a sanctuary.

Belayche suggests that contemporary scholarship which takes postcolonial perspectives has motivated recent interest in studies of local or indigenous cults.¹⁸ I am not taking a postcolonial perspective, but I appreciate that scholarship in this field seeks out local and indigenous culture and influences against a dominant mainstream. In

¹⁴ The names of indigenous gods differed between localities, and were similarly shared between communities. They are too numerous to repeat, Schnabel, “Divine Tyranny,” 160-188 provides comprehensive insight into the number of different indigenous cults involved in the area of confession and penance. For an example of the diversification of deities between villages see 173-4.

¹⁵ Mitchell, *Anatolia* 2, 19.

¹⁶ Riel, “Society and Economy,” 77.

¹⁷ Riel, “Society and Economy,” 77.

¹⁸ Belayche, “Religious Rhetoric,” 245.

the context of indigenous groups in ancient Asia Minor, a postcolonial perspective looks for evidence of activity of indigenous groups as distinct from Hellenistic or Roman, or especially from the second century CE, Christian, influences. A postcolonial methodology sits comfortably with assimilation theory as it gives further nuanced insights into cultural groups in Asia Minor.

4.3 The impact of Hellenisation and Romanisation on indigenous groups

Hellenistic culture was tolerant of indigenous groups and no active effort was made to transform rural culture.¹⁹ Exposure to mainstream Hellenistic cultural influences on indigenous groups happened in the ordinary course of marketplace interaction, public events, trade and commerce. Through acculturation and integration, the processes of Hellenisation affected the smaller indigenous groups.

Rural pagan culture was distinctive from urban. It was less Hellenised and morally more conservative.²⁰ People understood their lives and the wellbeing of their communities as governed by the will of the gods.²¹ With this focus of dependence on divine activity, the gods of justice and vengeance were especially prominent.²² In Mitchell's judgement, the prevalence of cults dedicated to indigenous deities in rural regions reflects "the authentic Phrygian environment."²³ In this environment the influence of Hellenistic culture was minimal.²⁴

¹⁹ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 88; Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 131.

²⁰ Mitchell, *Anatolia 2*, 36.

²¹ Dependence on gods for livelihood was common between country and city, except that the gods of justice were seen to be more actively involved in the justice system than human made laws and institutions. This will be explained further in the next chapter under the section on transgression, confession, penance.

²² Riel, "Society and Economy," 100.

²³ Mitchell, *Anatolia 2*, 25.

²⁴ Strelan, "Languages of the Lycus Valley," 77 refers to the Lykos Valley in Phrygia as being a Hellenised environment, yet also states on pages 85-6 that the valley was not heavily populated or urbanised and that most people lived in small towns or on

The ubiquity of temples in both cities and country suggests that cult activities and dependence on gods for livelihood was a shared human experience. In rural areas, away from the direct political influences of cities and human laws and institutions, communities looked to the gods of justice to be active agents in settling disputes.²⁵ The situation of rural people and their sense of dependence on the gods for livelihood is explained carefully by Riçl.²⁶ She discusses that in the less Hellenised rural environment, removed from the direct political influence of cities, the sanctuary provided a central meeting place of a community – the place of worship, justice provision, decision making.

In the country, the dedication of a sanctuary occurred before the establishment of a settlement.²⁷ The primacy of ensuring sacred space and the beneficence of the gods was as important in the country as in the city.²⁸ Settlements developed around the sanctuary, making it a centre of rural life. The alignment of a settlement around a sanctuary suggests the people shared a sense that the land and its produce, the people and animals, all belonged to the gods and existed under the care of gods. The needs of crop success, and the well-being of the people and their animals was a daily reality in areas remote from the city.

Sometimes rural sanctuaries grew in prominence so significantly that they took over nearby towns and cities. This happened with the oracle centres of Didyma-Miletos and Klaros-Kolophon.²⁹ In this instance, the

estates or in small rural villages. If the valley was not highly urbanised, it might indicate a less Hellenised context than Strelan intimates. This also strengthens his case for the multiplicity of language use within that context. Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 28 agrees that there was “intensive Hellenization of the Lycus Valley,” and that this overshadowed indigenous ethnic identity, and at 40, that the Valley was densely urban.

²⁵ Riçl, “Society and Economy,” 100.

²⁶ Riçl, “Society and Economy.”

²⁷ Riçl, “Society and Economy,” 77.

²⁸ In many Greek and Roman cities temples were built first, on a level topped hill or mound, and the rest of the city spread out from that important founding place.

²⁹ H. W. Parke, *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 112.

success of these rural sites became so great that they became sites of international pilgrimage.

As aspects of Romanisation affected Asia Minor there were changes in the physical rural landscape. Distinctive Roman architecture appeared, such as aqueducts for improved water supply, and villas for wealthy citizens.³⁰ Land holdings increased as the imperial period progressed. Already large cities increased in size and smaller cities experienced less growth.³¹ More cities appeared and by the second century CE many people identified themselves by belonging to a certain city.³² Under Roman control urbanisation increased and rural life declined.³³ In this process, Hellenisation further permeated into previously rural indigenous dominated land.

The overarching imperial culture in Asia Minor subjected ethnic identity in a way that Hellenisation did not. Before Roman rule but after the sweep of Hellenisation through Asia, indigenous groups existed in territories defined by natural boundaries such as watercourses,³⁴ and the boundaries were more flexible.³⁵ These boundaries changed over time with indigenous group activity. The flexibility of boundaries enabled mutual acculturation to occur between indigenous groups. Cultural practices, religion and ideology were exchanged in the boundary areas.³⁶

The Romans divided Asia Minor into administrative provinces and assize districts which took no account of previous ethnic territories.³⁷

The Roman authoritative system involved clear boundaries. Groups of

³⁰ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 126.

³¹ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 125.

³² Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 127; Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 27.

³³ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 125.

³⁴ Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 27.

³⁵ Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 122; Strabo *Geography* 13.4.12.

³⁶ Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 120.

³⁷ Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 122. Mitchell's understanding of 'ethnic' is based on Strabo's use of ἔθνη to refer to the indigenous Anatolian groups inhabiting Asia Minor. Strabo 13.3.2.

reorganised people became known as κοινά, *koina* – common groups. The Romans intended the *koina* to be provincial associations. Each corresponded to an administrative province, or to a section of an administrative province.³⁸ The *koina* were dependent on a Roman grant of permission to operate. Indigenous groups that were powerful in Asia Minor before the Romans, such as the Phrygians, Pisidians and Isaurians did not receive status as *koina*. Of these three, Tatian mentions the worth of the Phrygians and Isaurians in the opening lines of his *Oration ad Graecos*.³⁹ The Romans divided Phrygia into the provinces of Asia and Galatia, potentially indicating that they perceived strong indigenous groups as a threat to Roman authority.

Following Roman rule, official attempts to encourage interaction between cultural groups only involved the elite and were of limited value in promoting real exchange at informal level or generating any sense of ethnically based community.⁴⁰

Roman authority was also applied to Jews in the empire, especially in relation to taxation, whether they practiced Jewish customs or not.⁴¹ All Jews were grouped together without consideration for diversification within the groups.⁴² From evidence of the experience of indigenous groups in Asia Minor and Jewish groups around the

³⁸ Mitchell, “Ethnicity,” 125.

³⁹ Tatian *Oratio ad Graecos* 1. Tatian is challenging his Greek audience to look beyond their preconceived bias against the *barbaroi*. The value of augury to the Greeks from the Phrygians and Isaurians is here named.

⁴⁰ Mitchell, “Ethnicity,” 126. Provincial gatherings involved the wealthy who functioned as priests, magistrates and city delegates. They were culturally mainstream Greek. Greek was the primary identification of the wealthy over ethnic identification.

⁴¹ Suetonius *Domitianus* 12.2. Following the Roman defeat of Judaea in 70 CE the emperor Vespasian instigated a tax on Jews within the empire which his successor Domitian followed up with severity: praeter ceteros Iudaicus fiscus acerbissime actus est – *more than the rest he enacted the Jewish tax most harshly*. He acted against those who professed Judaism openly as much as those who did not, either to avoid the tax or because they did not identify ethnically or culturally as Jews.

⁴² At least for the purposes of taxation, as the example from Suetonius quoted above shows.

empire, Roman practice toward minority cultural groups consistently undervalued ethnic diversity.

Roman authoritative practices in Asia Minor required indigenous groups to assimilate at a formal structural assimilation, or group integrational level. Group integration required conformity to the mainstream culture. The people were integrated into structures that suited the official purposes of the governing authority. There were some advantages to integrating, at least for wealthy rural provincials. Advantages included political leverage with Roman officials, acquisition of civic positions and representation in wider contexts.⁴³

Most people however were not involved in decision making. For most people, the dominant Roman system remade traditional ethnic boundaries. The Roman administrative processes impacted on indigenous groups more than the influences of Hellenisation, which did not actively impose burdens on indigenous groups.⁴⁴ Indigenous cultural groups prior to Roman rule were acculturated with neighbouring indigenous groups. Groups assimilated Hellenistic culture as they encountered it, taking up elements and leaving others whilst maintaining ethnic distinction, at least in many rural and semi-rural contexts.

The important distinctions between Hellenistic and Roman culture are highlighted in the rural cultural environment. Hellenisation of the cultural mainstream did not impact on rural groups to the same degree as Romanisation. Within a Hellenistic cultural mainstream, rural group boundaries were permitted to remain flexible and there was expression of ethnic difference between groups. This allowed an

⁴³ Positions for wealthy Asians included the imperial priesthood, the asiarchate, and other official governing roles. See Steven Friesen, "Asiarchs," *ZPE* 126 (1999): 275-90.

⁴⁴ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 88 on the toleration of indigenous groups in the Hellenistic cultural environment, based on Hellenisation being an urban feature, and indigenous groups mostly belonging to rural areas.

ongoing process of acculturation between rural groups and the mainstream. Under Roman authority the imposition of formal boundaries restricted the interaction of indigenous groups and limited the opportunity for ethnic difference to colour the countryside. Powerful groups did not receive status as *koina*, indicating indigenous autonomy was perceived as a threat to Roman authority. The Roman cultural base was thus different from Hellenism.⁴⁵

4.4 Language usage as an indicator of indigenous group assimilation

An appraisal of the evidence of indigenous language usage assists in building a view of the rural cultural environment. Indigenous language retention beyond Hellenisation and Romanisation signifies resistance to, or dissimilation from the cultural mainstream. It suggests the tenacity of indigenous groups and the strength of rural communities.

Indigenous languages were many and varied in Asia Minor leading up to and beyond Hellenisation of the cultural mainstream and even the establishment of Roman authority in Asia Minor. In Christian tradition, when Paul and Barnabas arrived at Lystra they were hailed as gods in an indigenous Lykaonian language:

οἱ τε ὄχλοι ἰδόντες ὃ ἐποίησεν Παῦλος ἐπήραν τὴν φωνὴν αὐτῶν Λυκαονιστὶ λέγοντες, Οἱ θεοὶ ὁμοιωθέντες ἀνθρώποις κατέβησαν πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ἐκάλουν τε τὸν Βαρναβᾶν Δία, τὸν δὲ Παῦλον Ἑρμῆν, ἐπειδὴ αὐτὸς ἦν ὁ ἡγούμενος τοῦ λόγου.⁴⁶

and the crowd seeing what Paul did raised their voice in Lykaonian saying, the gods have come down in human form to us, and they called Barnabas Zeus, and Paul Hermes, since he was the one leading the speech.

This one example from the biblical corpus indicates that indigenous languages continued to be spoken in at least certain contexts after

⁴⁵ This is discussed further below.

⁴⁶ Acts 14.11-12.

Hellenisation and into the imperial era. If Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra, as the Acts text indicates, then this indigenous language prevailed amongst the crowds even in a small urban environment.⁴⁷

How common was *koine* in Asia Minor?⁴⁸ The above passage from Acts suggests that a common Greek language may not have prevailed as a primary language throughout all parts of Asia Minor. The βάρβαροι and Σκύθαι, barbarians and Scythians of the Kolossian letter might also indicate the presence of other languages.⁴⁹ Further inscriptional evidence discussed in this section supports the presence of multiple languages other than Greek.

From central and western Asia Minor inscriptions containing versions of indigenous Phrygian have been discovered. The Phrygian language is derived from Dacia and Thrace. Phrygian language texts predating the first century CE are known as ‘old’ or ‘palaeo’ Phrygian. The letters were related to the Phoenician alphabet. Phrygian language texts from the first to the third century CE are referred to by linguists as Neophrygian. Letters are related to the Greek language. When Rick Strelan compiled his study on the languages of the Lykos Valley in Asia Minor, 120 extant inscriptions record Neophrygian text.⁵⁰ The relationship of Neophrygian to the Greek alphabet suggests why it was likely to have been sustained through the imperial era. Half of the Neophrygian inscriptions contain Greek as well as Phrygian script, and almost all are funeral texts, with a small number of imprecations against grave theft.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Acts 14.8: ἐν Λύστροις – *in Lystra*.

⁴⁸ *Koine* Greek, from κοινή, common, is applied to the Greek language that developed through hellenisation of Asia Minor. It was a dialect that was spoken in most places, especially cities.

⁴⁹ Kol. 3.11. Assimilation theory affirms that migrating racial groups brought with them into Asia their own languages, gods, and distinctive cultural customs.

⁵⁰ Strelan, “The Languages of the Lycus Valley,” 96.

⁵¹ Strelan, “The Languages of the Lycus Valley,” 96-7.

The following epitaph from Sülüklü in south Galatia suggests Phrygian influence:

Νουμίσιος	<i>Noumisios</i>
ἰδία γυνηχί Ἄ-	<i>(made) the favour of a</i>
μια μνής κάρ-	<i>memorial to his own wife Amia</i>
ι {χάριν} καὶ Δόμνος	<i>and Domnos for the favour of a</i>
ἰδία τυγαθερε	<i>memorial to his own daughter</i>
μνής κάρι {χάριν} σιν	<i>to his own</i>
ἰδία θρεφτῆ {θρεπτῆ}	<i>house reared girl</i>
Ἄμιας ⁵²	<i>Amias</i>

Local Phrygian influence may be noted in the correction in the inscription of the words κάρι to χάριν, and θρεφτῆ to θρεπτῆ.⁵³ Variation in the spelling of γυνηχί and τυγαθερε appear to be regional variations of the common Greek words for woman/wife and daughter, and are also likely influenced by the local Phrygian dialect.

The persistence of Neophrygian in inscriptional form until around 250 CE is an indicator of resistance to mainstream Greek.⁵⁴ It is an example of dissimilation. It builds a case for the endurance of indigenous groups over the swell of Hellenisation.

In literature, Strabo attests to many oral languages,⁵⁵ and in Kibyra of south west Phrygia he names the four languages that were used there: Pisidian, Solyman, Greek and Lydian.⁵⁶ Pisidian is one other indigenous language found in epigraphical evidence besides Phrygian

⁵² MAMA VI.347.

⁵³ PHI database no. PH266707.

⁵⁴ Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 18. Although Strelan, “The Languages of the Lycus Valley,” 97 qualifies that the survival of written Phrygian is to be noted mostly in cultic and private spheres.

⁵⁵ Strabo *Geography* 11.4.6.

⁵⁶ Strabo *Geography* 13.4.17: τέτταρσι δὲ γλώτταις ἐχρῶντο οἱ Κιβυρᾶται, τῆ Πισιδικῆ τῆ Σολύμων τῆ Ἑλληνίδι τῆ Λυδῶν... δὲ οὐδ’ ἔχνος ἐστὶν ἐν Λυδίᾳ – *the Kibyrians used four languages, the Pisidian, the Solyman, the Greek, the Lydian... but there is no trace (of Lydian) in Lydia*. This last reference to Lydian, no longer in use in Lydia, itself reflects the vulnerability of indigenous languages as the cultural mainstream changed to Hellenisation and was subsequently impacted by Romanisation.

known to have survived Hellenisation. A cluster of texts was discovered at Sofular in north east Pisidia.⁵⁷ These are all epitaphs and date from the Roman period. Greek script is used to express on stone an indigenous language previously unknown.⁵⁸ In addition, Cappadocian, Celtic, Isaurian, Lykaonian, and Mysian are noted as surviving Hellenisation of Asia Minor.⁵⁹

The Phrygian and Pisidian inscriptional evidence appears to be concentrated in remote rural areas of Asia Minor.⁶⁰ As observed by Strelan there were many rural dwellers in the Lykos Valley, and indigenous dialects prevailed over Greek.⁶¹ In fact Greek was likely a second language identification for many residents of the valley.⁶² Particularly for those living outside of the main three cities of Hierapolis, Laodikeia and Kolossai, as well as the many smaller settlements, Greek language would only have been used in trade and business dealings.⁶³ Strelan's study of language usage confirms that Hellenisation was largely present in urban centres and had minimal impact on rural communities. His study is limited however, by the comparatively small area investigated.

Evidence for a multitude of languages spoken, including indigenous dialects, is provided by a recently discovered inscription from Kolossai of a certain Markos, an ἀρχερμηνεύς, chief translator, and ἐξηγητής, interpreter, of the city.

⁵⁷ Colin J. Hemer, "The Pisidian Texts: A Problem of Language and History," *Kadmos* 19/1 (1980): 54 notes 1-2, referring to the publications of these texts: W. M. Ramsay, "Inscriptions en langue pisidienne," *Revue des universités du Midi* I (1895): 353 ff; J. Borchhardt, G. Neumann and K. Schultz, "Vier pisidische Grabstelen aus Sofular," *Kadmos* 14 (1975): 68-72.

⁵⁸ Hemer, "The Pisidian Texts," 54-55 lays out the transliteration of the texts following the form of inscription without attempts at word division.

⁵⁹ Strelan, "The Languages of the Lycus Valley," 89 referring to K. Holl, "Das Fortleben der Volkssprachen in Kleinasien in nachchristlicher Zeit," *Hermes* 43 (1908): 240-54.

⁶⁰ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 92.

⁶¹ Strelan, "The Languages of the Lycus Valley," 88-9.

⁶² Strelan, "The Languages of the Lycus Valley," 101.

⁶³ Strelan, "The Languages of the Lycus Valley," 86.

Μάρκωι Μαρκοῦ
Κολοσσηνῶν
ἀρχεπιμηνεῖ
καὶ ἐξηγητῆι⁶⁴

(dedicated to) Markos son of Markos
chief translator
and interpreter of the Kolossians



Figure 3: The interpreter inscription from Kolossai in situ as discovered by Alan Cadwallader, 2005. Photo source: author.

The official and leading role of this Markos, inscribed on a limestone pedestal with no other surrounding text, indicates there was status and position attached to the role, as well as sufficient need for the business of translation in civic affairs. Multiple language usage was then accommodated in at least the city of Kolossai through the provision of translators in the civic context. This service would have enabled the interaction of different cultural groups at a structural assimilation, or integrational level, enriching ethnic diversity in civic and business matters, and opening opportunities for acculturation. It

⁶⁴ Alan H. Cadwallader, “A New Inscription, a Correction and a Confirmed Sighting from Colossae,” *EA* 40 (2007): 113-14.

also suggests that remote rural dwellers had dealings with the cities and villages, and that indigenous languages were not only spoken in the country.

Whilst Greek was the dominant script on inscriptions it does not negate the possibility that indigenous languages were behind any given text.⁶⁵ Inscriptions as primary evidence used to study people, language and other aspects of culture in multilingual settings has a methodological limitation. Strelan points out that it is not necessarily clear from texts produced in multilingual contexts what was the language spoken by the scribe or commissioner of an inscription.⁶⁶

What amounts in our eyes as errors in Greek transcription may simply be dialectical variations, intrusions of indigenous script, or the efforts of a person working in what was not their first language. It need not mean that a scribe was illiterate. Mitchell's assessment of "untutored" confession texts,⁶⁷ and "artless narrative"⁶⁸ on inscriptions must be questioned. The texts might otherwise indicate indigenous language background, and therefore the ongoing viability of indigenous groups within a Hellenistic cultural mainstream.

The prevalence of indigenous languages in rural areas, and as the interpreter text from Kolossai indicates, in the cities too, suggest Greek language, which is an aspect of Hellenisation, was a secondary cultural identification, at least in some parts of Asia Minor.

In an assimilation theory model, indigenous language usage is a measure of resistance to, or dissimilation from, the mainstream Hellenistic culture. Barclay uses language as an indicator of

⁶⁵ Strelan, "The Languages of the Lycus Valley," 89.

⁶⁶ Strelan, "The Languages of the Lycus Valley," 79.

⁶⁷ Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1, 193, referring to *MAMA* IV.285 from a sanctuary of Apollo Lairbenos which, "pays virtually no heed to orthodox forms of *koine*." Indigenous language influence likely contributes to the variations in spelling in this example: line 6: προγεμένε for προκειμένε, line 10: λημόνησα for ἐλησμόνησα.

⁶⁸ Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1, 192.

Hellenisation,⁶⁹ and both Strelan and Mitchell emphasise it as important in preserving ethnic identity.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the value of language usage for assessing levels of assimilation of cultural groups has limitations, especially beyond a rural context. The fact that as Strelan says, we cannot know what language the writer or commissioner of an inscription knew or spoke, inhibits what conclusions we can make about assimilation.⁷¹ A well written Greek inscription might indicate a Hellenised scribe but an indigenous Phrygian commissioner of the inscription. Or a less well written inscription might indicate an indigenous scribe and conceal a Hellenised commissioner of the inscription.

Assimilation theory applied to minority groups shows that the length of time a cultural group is exposed to mainstream culture lessens the capacity for the survival of cultural distinctions.⁷² This means that the preservation of indigenous languages is susceptible to erosion over time.⁷³ Language is important for identifying the prevalence of indigenous groups, and it is an indicator for assimilation. However, when making use of language to assess assimilation, other evidence must be used in addition to build a case.

Language usage does not determine the assimilation of Jewish groups and the ethnic identity of Jews, who in Asia rarely spoke the Hebrew of their native tradition.⁷⁴ The Greek Septuagint was the usual resource for scripture and the fact that the Masoretic Text was translated into Greek indicates the need for it. Liturgical readings

⁶⁹ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 89-90.

⁷⁰ Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 129; Strelan, "The Languages of the Lycus Valley," 101.

⁷¹ Strelan, "The Languages of the Lycus Valley," 79-80.

⁷² Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 26.

⁷³ Thus, Strabo's observation that the Lydian language was no longer spoken in Lydia. *Geography* 13.4.17: δὲ οὐδ' ἵχνος ἔστιν ἐν Λυδίᾳ.

⁷⁴ Most Jewish inscriptions in Asia Minor are written in Greek. A fragmentary bilingual inscription in Hebrew and Greek from the region of Akmonia in Phrygia is noted. *IJO* 170; *MAMA* VI 334; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 82.

were also formulated in daily language.⁷⁵ Instructions for the regular prayers of worship used by Jews in the morning, to accompany meals and blessings, as well as oaths of testimony and bailment are contained in this mishnaic corpus. Prayers required to be said in Hebrew related to the temple or to biblical law.⁷⁶ Levine says some of these Hebrew prayers were no longer relevant in the time the Mishnah was composed.⁷⁷ Again, a cautionary note about the degree of knowledge in Asia Minor of the rabbinic law contained in the Mishnah must be added. What is known about the influence of rabbinic Judaism from Palestine, Egypt and from the west cannot be automatically applied throughout the entire Roman Empire.⁷⁸

Contradicting this is a rabbinic prohibition on the use of Greek language.⁷⁹ Contradictions such as this emphasise the diversity of Jewish communities, the inconsistent content of rabbinic teaching, and the uneven rate of Jewish assimilation. If Hebrew language was used in only a limited biblical context in the period after the destruction of the second temple, as Levine suggests,⁸⁰ then it may have served much like the indigenous Neophrygian language of the third century CE Asia Minor. Assessment of the use of both Hebrew and Neophrygian are of

⁷⁵ *m. Sotah*, trans. Jacob Neusner 7.1: “These are said in any language: (1) the pericope of the accused wife [Num 5.19-22], and (2) the confession of the tithe [Deut 26.13-15], and (3) the recital of the *Shema*, [Deut 6.4-9], and (4) the Prayer, (5) the oath of testimony, and (6) the oath concerning a bailment. The languages of daily use, particularly Greek and Aramaic are implied in this instruction.

⁷⁶ *m. Sotah* 7.2: A. “And these are said [only] in the Holy Language: (1) the verses of the first fruits [Deut 26.3-10], (2) the rite of *halisah* [Deut 25.7,9], (3) blessings and curses [Deut 27.15-26], (4) the blessing of the priests [Num 6.24-26], (5) the blessing of a high priest [on the Day of Atonement], (6) the pericope of the king [Deut 17.14-20].

⁷⁷ The Mishnah may be dated to c.220 CE. Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 127.

⁷⁸ As Collar presents in her assessment of the influence of rabbinic Judaism in *Religious Networks*.

⁷⁹ *m. Sotah* 9.14 C: “And [they decreed] that a man should not teach Greek to his son.” *b. Megillah* 9a; *Masekhet Soferim* 1.7, ed M. Higger, (New York: Debe’Rabban, 1937), 101-5; Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 126.

⁸⁰ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 127.

limited use in reconstructing the cultural environment from an assimilation theory basis.

Despite the tenacity of indigenous languages in mostly rural contexts such as Strelan has surmised, in cities Greek language gave access to literary resources and a system of values which Barclay says were fundamental to the Greek identification of civilisation.⁸¹ This was civilisation built upon Hellenistic cultural norms. Acquisition of commonly held Hellenistic cultural ideals and recognised virtues was part of an acculturating process. A broad range of facility in Greek indicated moderate assimilation with the cultural mainstream, noting the limitations from inscriptional evidence discussed above.

The dominance of mainstream Hellenism in an urban environment might indicate that Greek language was held in higher esteem in the city than in the country. As Barclay has shown, proficiency in Greek language is a factor of Hellenisation leading to assimilation with the mainstream.⁸² The slower penetration of Hellenisation into the country and the persistence of indigenous languages suggests that Roman imposed boundaries did not drastically affect the ethnicity of indigenous groups, even though it compromised the long-term viability of powerful rural groups.

4.5 Summary – indigenous groups in the cultural environment

In the first three centuries, the indigenous cultural environment was a mostly rural environment inhabited by many different groups. Ethnic identification differentiated these groups. Ethnicity and language were closely related.⁸³ The effects of Hellenisation were less evident in the rural environment than in cities. This affirms that Hellenisation was

⁸¹ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 95.

⁸² Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 88-90.

⁸³ Hemer, "The Pisidian Texts," 62.

an urban phenomenon and that indigenous rural groups maintained a degree of ethnic distinction from the mainstream. Hellenistic culture which emanated from the structures of cities did not intentionally transform rural culture, meaning that indigenous customs were able to be maintained. This contributed to the significant distinctions between the rural and urban cultural environments. By the processes of assimilation changes inevitably happened which made Hellenisation apparent in the country, especially through the interactive processes of trade and commerce.

Indigenous language retention occurred in rural parts of Asia, providing evidence of thriving indigenous communities. This was despite the administrative impact of transference of overall authority in Asia to the Roman Empire. Under the effects of Romanisation indigenous cultural groups were no longer able to maintain flexible boundaries and previously powerful groups did not receive status as new groups. Following Roman rule, maintenance of ethnic distinction happened outside of imposed boundary regulations. The superficial provincial associations set up by the Romans, the *koina*, which benefitted wealthy landholders, did not contribute to the prosperity or community life of indigenous groups. Instead the central place of the rural temple continued to characterise ethnic communities.

Indigenous language usage among rural groups indicates low acculturation. The use of Greek language among indigenous groups was convenience based, as a tool of communication in epitaphs, and for economic benefits through business dealings. The use of Greek language for trade and business dealings between city and country suggests moderate integration. As established in Riel's study on rural temples, the relationship of indigenous groups with their gods and cults created self-sufficiency and independence from civic justice

systems.⁸⁴ This independence indicates the low integration of a rural temple community from culturally mainstream cities. Wealthy rural dwellers associated with Roman authority structures through the *koina* exhibited much higher integration. Their primary Greek identification over ethnic suggests a higher acculturation.

Assimilation of indigenous groups with the Hellenistic cultural mainstream can be described as variable when accounting the factors of integration and acculturation noted above. Mainstream culture was used for advantage where needed.

4.6 Urban cultural groups and the urban cultural environment

Traditional pagans within an urban environment expressed mainstream cultural Hellenisation. Jews and Christians in urban settings were minority groups. In this section, I assess the impact of Romanisation on the urban Hellenistic mainstream. I then discuss the imperial cult as representative of Roman rule in the first three centuries, then assess the assimilation of minority groups in the urban environment. This brings the study to a place where I may sum up the cultural environment of Asia Minor and the diversity of its people.

Cultural groups in an urban environment were more likely to be Hellenised than their rural counterparts.⁸⁵ The urban environment of Asia Minor between the first and the third centuries CE was Greek, based around Hellenistic cities. Graeco-Roman pagans made up the mainstream cultural base. These identified with Hellenistic culture as primary. Traditional pagan groups worshipped the gods of the city, among other deities.⁸⁶ They belonged to associations connected with

⁸⁴ Riel, "Society and Economy."

⁸⁵ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 24.

⁸⁶ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 188 on civic pagan religion.

pagan cults and with their occupations.⁸⁷ Ethnic identification when it applied was secondary. This is the reverse practice evident in rural environments.⁸⁸ Minority groups within cities included Jews and Christians, ethnically indigenous people who moved into cities, people originating from beyond Asia Minor. The factors affecting assimilation, including occupation, social status, gender and age, affected the variability of assimilation of minority groups in the urban environment.

In Asia Minor in the first three centuries CE cities were Hellenised environments, shaped by Greek models.⁸⁹ They were either built around older Anatolian cities or they were new cities. Greek colonists or soldiers founded new cities.⁹⁰ The new cities incorporated many Greek architectural features. Some of these included gymnasium, bath house, theatre, agora, bouleterion.⁹¹ During the imperial period urbanisation increased,⁹² transforming the rural landscape and impacting on Anatolian traditions. Hellenised cities were attractive to many groups because they accommodated a diversification of cultural expressions, enabling many different people to fit in.

Mainstream Hellenistic cultural groups and their urban environments experienced changes as the Roman Empire expanded and Roman control of Asia Minor took place. Through all this, distinct Hellenism remained culturally dominant in the Asian cities, as will be discussed below.

⁸⁷ Such as the association of purple-dyers and carpet weavers in Hierapolis. See Harland, "Acculturation and Identity in the Diaspora."

⁸⁸ As discussed above, wealthy rural landholders identified with Greek culture first.

⁸⁹ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 21.

⁹⁰ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 21.

⁹¹ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 21. Older, already established cities that came under the influence of Hellenistic culture did not always add these architectural features to their urban scapes.

⁹² Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 125.

4.7 The impact of Romanisation on Hellenistic urban cultural groups

The Hellenistic environment became subject to the impact of Romanisation following the incorporation of Asia Minor as a Roman administrative unit in the late Republic. From the first century BCE, Roman imperial dominance began to impact upon the Hellenised east. For urban centres, this meant architectural changes incorporating Roman styles and Roman functionality. This changed the visual aspect of Hellenistic cities and influenced the kind of activities which took place within them. Architectural changes to Hellenistic cities included the addition of bathhouses to gymnasium complexes and the construction of new bath-gymnasium buildings.⁹³ Whilst Hellenistic cities before Roman cultural influence had baths and gymnasia, Romans put the two together. Other visual changes included the more obvious public display of statues in togas, notably statues of the current Roman emperor and his wife. The presence of imperial statuary influenced urban clothing and hairstyle fashions. Activities which were specifically Roman in character, such as gladiatorial games, appeared in the imperial era.

Political and administrative changes also came with Roman rule. Ethnic regions were administratively restructured⁹⁴ and proconsular leadership was established throughout Asia.

Greg Woolf establishes in his study of Romanisation on the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire that material culture had a different value for Romans than it did for Hellenised Asians. The differing value placed on material things between Greeks and Romans meant the construction of new types of buildings did not adversely impact on the

⁹³ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 126. The building of the bath-gymnasium began at the time of Augustus' first expansion and continued into the second and third centuries CE. These building types were especially prominent in major urban centres of Asia Minor such as Ephesos, Smyrna, Sardis, Miletos and Aphrodisias.

⁹⁴ See section above on the impact of Hellenisation and Romanisation on indigenous groups.

Hellenistic culture of Asian cities.⁹⁵ For Romans, material culture was aligned with morality, and both material culture and morality were closely linked to self-identity.⁹⁶ Greeks did not share with Romans a moral connection with material culture. Styles and trends characterised Roman culture, unlike Greek culture.⁹⁷ The lack of attachment to material culture meant that new architectural building types and styles brought about by Roman rule were incorporated into the Hellenistic cityscape in the way of fashion rather than signifying deep cultural change.

Roman culture differed from Hellenisation in that there was a central authority in the person of the Roman Emperor. The figure of the emperor influenced Roman identity and shaped heritage. Political authority issued from Rome. This was physically represented by Roman provincial staff and enforced by the Roman army. Romans did not base their culture on any particular language, or common descent, and their tradition from the beginning was based around incorporating many different groups of people into their mix.⁹⁸ On the other hand, the cultural identity of Greeks included valuing a common descent through mythology, holding the same customs, speaking the Greek language and worshipping the same gods.⁹⁹ Being Greek involved sharing as inheritors in an ideological golden age of classical Greece, from which emerged common literary traditions, such as Homer's epics.

Romanisation as a cultural process had a different impact in the east than the west of the empire. In the west, the cultural changes toward Romanisation in the conquered provinces were more dramatic. In Gaul and Spain at least, these changes led to marked transformation of

⁹⁵ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 120.

⁹⁶ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 120.

⁹⁷ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 130.

⁹⁸ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 120.

⁹⁹ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 130.

culture away from indigenous traditions.¹⁰⁰ In the east, the acquisition of Roman cultural elements such as bathing habits and gladiatorial games were culturally superficial. They did not transform Hellenistic culture, largely because of the differing value Greeks and Romans placed in material culture.

In addition to architectural and administrative changes, Romanisation involved the political aspect of enfranchisement and acquisition of elite social status for the wealthy.¹⁰¹ Enfranchisement and the subsequent rise in social mobility for the wealthy occurred in both urban and rural environments.¹⁰² This indicates that Romanisation was not inclusive of people from all social statuses.

Politically, the processes of Romanisation involved giving Roman citizenship to the provincial elite. The availability of citizenship to provincials increased after 100 CE.¹⁰³ Citizenship, if we are to believe the account of Luke in Acts, provided Paul with certain rights and privileges, including trial by Roman authorities over local.¹⁰⁴ Roman citizenship provided the opportunity for mobility and success for aspiring people. With citizenship came access into political and civic roles. These roles had various customs attached to them, including involvement in civic and imperial cult.

This had potential consequences for Jews when they became involved in politics through their citizenship. Public events in cities including festivals and competitions were carried out in honour of specific pagan gods. Sponsoring officials of these events were required to be involved

¹⁰⁰ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 127; Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 117: "There (in the western empire) the arrival of barbarian groups, which can be traced back to the early empire, but which intensified radically from the fourth century onwards, brought significant changes to the ethnic composition of Roman provinces, eventually leading to their disintegration and to the creation of new societies which embraced both the newcomers and the former provincial inhabitants."

¹⁰¹ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 116.

¹⁰² Mitchell, "Ethnicity," 122-6.

¹⁰³ Friesen, "Asiarchs," 279 n. 37.

¹⁰⁴ Acts 22.25-29.

in procuring sacrifices to the gods, and even in leading sacrificial rituals.¹⁰⁵ Trebilco offers several options for Jews in contexts where there was pagan sacrifice.¹⁰⁶ These options included avoidance of being in the environment of pagan sacrifice altogether, being involved but seeking exemption from direct participation, attending pagan public events when sacrifices did not happen, being present but ignoring sacrificial acts, and being fully involved in pagan public events (including sacrifices).¹⁰⁷ He notes that the evidence does not reveal to what extent Jews took up these options concerning pagan sacrificial acts. It seems Jewish communities negotiated it in different ways. In Sardis, the large gymnasium complex was situated near to the synagogue, yet Trebilco says Jews in Sardis were sufficiently confident in “the vitality of their Judaism” that they remained thoroughly Jewish.¹⁰⁸ In Akmonia, the influence of scripture was evident in the well-known curse formulae used on graves.¹⁰⁹ The reliance on scripture, which extended to the curse formulae used on non-Jewish graves, suggests Jews in Akmonia were familiar with their traditions of ethnic origin based on the law.¹¹⁰ In Aphrodisias the Jews named on the *theosebeis* inscription do not have occupations listed next to their name that would have been prohibited in Jewish tradition.¹¹¹ In Miletos there were theatre seats reserved for Jews/*theosebeis*.¹¹² Whilst the evidence does not give a clear indication of the extent of Jewish involvement in pagan events or otherwise, it does suggest that

¹⁰⁵ Friesen, “Asiarchs,” 286.

¹⁰⁶ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 180-3.

¹⁰⁷ This last option involved complete assimilation, which as discussed in Chapter Two, was rare among Jews in Asia Minor.

¹⁰⁸ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 182.

¹⁰⁹ *MAMA* VI 335a, 335; *IJO* 173, 174 (from LXX Deuteronomy 27-30); *MAMA* VI 287 suggests a relationship with LXX Exodus 34.7, (as *CIJ* 767), but this has been subsequently disputed by Strubbe, “Curses Against Violation of the Grave,” 73-83. See discussion on the curses of the τέκνα τέκνων in Chapter Two.

¹¹⁰ See Chapter Two.

¹¹¹ Unlike some occupations of *theosebeis* named in the same inscription. See case study of Jewish assimilation in Aphrodisias in Chapter Seven section 7.10.

¹¹² The distinction between Jews and *theosebeis* is not clear at Miletos. See Chapter Seven section 7.9.

Jewish customs were well known within the Jewish community and beyond.

A high degree of integration of leading civic Jews can be presumed nonetheless. When the emperors Severus and Caracalla officially permitted Jews to abstain from pagan sacrifice greater mobility of more Jews within urban mainstream structures without conflicting with ethnic customs was made possible.¹¹³ The preservation of the first commandment¹¹⁴ was ensured by this permission. This enabled Jews to climb socially and economically without fear of breaking with the traditions of faith.

In 212 CE Caracalla granted citizenship to all free residents in the Roman Empire. This provided new status and opportunities for people. For the wealthy, citizenship could lead to placement within the socially high-ranking equestrian and senatorial classes.¹¹⁵ Politically prominent wealthy citizens patronised Roman style buildings and sponsored events such as gladiatorial games. Powerful people in Asia were given titles and offices of prestige, such as ἀσιάρχης, asiarch, or provincial high priesthoods.¹¹⁶ These had links with Rome and some were friends with Roman emperors.¹¹⁷ Imperial visits to the provinces provided opportunities for powerful people to strengthen their contacts with Rome and build their own positions in local political realms.

Roman rule did not bring about drastic changes in the cities of the east. The dominant urban language remained Greek. The Latin of Rome was a minority language in the eastern empire.¹¹⁸ The changes

¹¹³ Diogenes Laertius 2.3.3 records the exemption granted Jews from activities conflicting with their religious traditions.

¹¹⁴ Ex 20.3; Deut 5.7.

¹¹⁵ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 125.

¹¹⁶ Friesen, "Asiarchs," 275-90 gives a thorough examination of the role of asiarchs among Roman citizens in Asia between 100-212 CE. Friesen makes clear in this article that the position of the asiarchate was not necessarily the same as a high priest of Asia.

¹¹⁷ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 127.

¹¹⁸ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 117.

that took place as part of the Romanising process did not adversely affect the Hellenistic cultural mainstream. Hellenistic institutions such as the gymnasium and symposium did not represent real structural unification before Roman rule.¹¹⁹ This meant that any institutional changes coming about through Romanisation were structural, and so part of the integration subprocess of assimilation. Hellenistic culture in the east therefore bypassed the ‘hot spots’ of Roman rule which might have otherwise caused conflict and subjugation. The result of this was that the environment of Asia Minor was culturally more independent of Rome than the western provinces.

Eastern urban Greeks took up Roman material culture through acculturation, but Woolf suggest that this did not represent real cultural changes.¹²⁰ Hellenistic Jews made use of contemporary material culture and building styles, but stayed ethnically Jewish within the urban environment.¹²¹ It was only later in antiquity that specific Jewish art and architectural style developed.¹²²

Urban Hellenistic groups did not cease to make up the mainstream culture during the period of Romanisation. Their assimilation with Roman culture occurred out of convenience and fashion, as well as through opportunities for status and wealth advancement. Roman and Greek cultures were similar enough for interaction with the Roman, and the values of one did not conflict with the values of the other. Greek and Roman culture coexisted. Boundaries were fluid enough to allow significant crossover. This can be seen in the taking up of Roman styles in architecture, dress, of accepting the prestige of official positions and becoming politically mobile within Roman structures.

¹¹⁹ Woolf, “Becoming Roman, Staying Greek,” 128.

¹²⁰ Woolf, “Becoming Roman, Staying Greek,” 128.

¹²¹ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 23.

¹²² See below.

Romans were not a minority group within Asia. Rather there was cultural sharing between Romans and Greeks that influenced and affected the other but did not affect the core differences between them. Convergence between Hellenised Asians and cultural Romans happened especially at the boundaries of group engagement.¹²³ Degrees of resistance to and dissimilation from politically dominant Roman culture both in urban and rural areas of Asia Minor contributed to the unique cultural environment highlighted in this chapter.

4.8 The imperial cult as representative of Roman rule

In this section, I offer some brief points on the imperial cult to fill out a view of the urban cultural environment during the period of influence of Romanisation in the first three centuries. In modern Ankara in Turkey, ancient Ankyra, lie the remains of an epic inscription in honour of the emperor Augustus. The *Res Gestae* is a funerary monument composed in the grammatical first person outlining the life and achievements of Augustus.¹²⁴ The huge inscription of the *Res Gestae* of Augustus gives a modern viewer insight into the overwhelming power of this one person, this emperor of Rome, the leader of the world. The inscription was copied from a now lost original, and reproduced in several parts of the empire. The version in Ankara is the most complete. The imposing monument, set within a temple to Augustus and Rome, signalled to Asia Minor that change was coming.

¹²³ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 131-2. Cultural engagement at the boundaries was also the experience of urban Jews. See Rajak, "Jewish Community," 19.

¹²⁴ Augustus died in 14 CE.

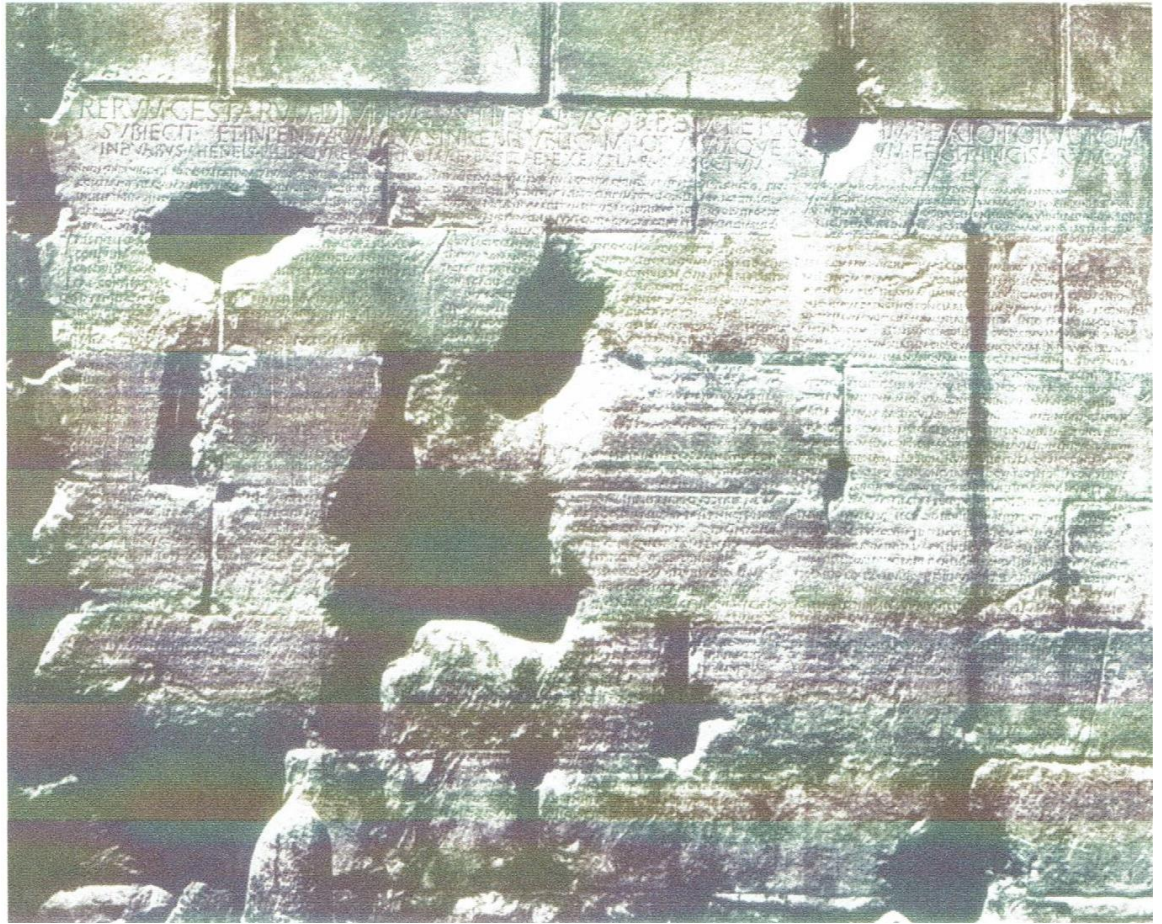


Figure 4: First half of *Res Gestae* inscription in the Temple of Augustus, Ankara. Picture from Daniel Krencker and Martin Schede, *Der Tempel in Ankara*, (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter Incorporated, 1936), in Suna Güven, “Displaying the *Res Gestae* of Augustus: A Monument of Imperial Image for All,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 57/1 (1998): 37.

Visits to the provinces by emperors were rare, and in Asia did not happen until the second century.¹²⁵ The authority of the emperor was present as military might throughout the provinces, and in the administrative officials appointed by Rome. The establishment of the imperial cult ensured that respect and honour was given the emperor even in his physical absence.

As noted in the previous section, Roman rule did not overcome the Hellenistic cultural mainstream of Asia Minor. It nonetheless had significant impact on political, economic, social and religious

¹²⁵ The visit of the emperor Hadrian to the Lykos Valley in 129 CE, discussed in Chapter Nine, would have been a significant event in the region.

structures. Whilst Greek cultural values in cities might have continued largely unaffected through the imperial period, urban populations were subject to certain changes brought about by Roman authority. The imperial cult was one such change.

The imperial cult influenced especially the Hellenistic urban environment in Asia.¹²⁶ It became part of a prestigious Greek culture.¹²⁷ There was a concentration of imperial cult places in Aphrodisias, Ephesos, Mytilene, Pergamon, Stratonikeia.¹²⁸ The cult was present in rural areas, but featured much less prominently in rural sanctuaries.¹²⁹ The widespread independence of rural communities from urban oversight, especially in matters of justice and religious devotion, contributed to its lack of influence in the rural environment. This enforced division between the urban elite and rural dwelling people, and set up a significant gap between rural cults and the imperial cult.

In physical terms, the imperial cult was expressed publicly and visually through temples and coins dedicated to the emperor and statues of Roman emperors. The emperor's image on coins reminded people of the dominance of the imperium in business transactions, and to whom the taxes were paid. Coinage spread from one end of the empire to the other. Statues adorned city squares, public buildings and temples.¹³⁰ The visually dominating *Res Gestae* inscription set within a temple to the emperor Augustus and to the city of Rome, was an example of imperial presence set within a religious context. It was also a symbol of pride in an era when cities competed to gain imperial

¹²⁶ See the catalogue of imperial temples and shrines in Asia Minor in Price, *Rituals and Power*, 249-74.

¹²⁷ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 94.

¹²⁸ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 4-5.

¹²⁹ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 96.

¹³⁰ On the significance of the images of Roman emperors and the inviolability of their bodies and by extension, the representations of their bodies, see Rosemary Canavan, *Clothing the Body of Christ at Colossae*, WUNT 334 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012): 121-3.

patronage. Inter-city conflict was engineered by the Roman hierarchy in the early imperial era to establish cohesion and encourage rivalry between cities for imperial recognition.¹³¹

The imperial cult was a complex institution involving religion, politics and power.¹³² It was incorporated into the melange of cultic expressions in the Hellenistic cities of Asia. The imperial cult was added to existing games, public festivals, and new festivals were established.¹³³ The imperial cult was a feature of all official civic activities.¹³⁴ In most instances the cult was a public phenomenon, although people did erect private altars and make votive offerings.¹³⁵

The imperial cult was internally competitive and significantly political.¹³⁶ Socially and politically mobile wealthy Asians sought to become allies with the imperial officers and ultimately with the emperor himself.¹³⁷

In traditional pagan religion, there was no overt understanding of personal belief or choice in which god or gods to worship, no differentiated religious groups.¹³⁸ Traditional pagan religion accompanied family structures, civic and administrative practices,

¹³¹ Alan Cadwallader, "Inter-city Conflict in the Story of St Michael of Chonai," in *Religious Conflict in the Early Christian World*, D. Luckensmeyer and M. Mayer, eds., (Tübingen: de Gruyter, 2013), [version accessed from author's manuscript, page 1].

¹³² Price, *Rituals and Power*, 1.

¹³³ For example, the long-established festival of the Nedameia added an imperial element, and was concurrently called Sebasta. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 3. See further, 101-32.

¹³⁴ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 109. Council houses sometimes had an imperial altar, as at Miletos and Ephesos.

¹³⁵ H. W. Pleket, "An Aspect of the Emperor Cult: Imperial Mysteries," *Harvard Theological Review* 58, no. 4 (1965): 334. However, in saying this, at the time of writing Pleket knew of no surviving evidence of votives either from a public cult or from within imperial mysteries.

¹³⁶ Pleket, "An Aspect of the Emperor Cult," 332. Pleket asks whether there was a genuine religious aspect to the imperial cult, or whether it was merely an expression of political allegiance. See also, Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 117.

¹³⁷ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 127.

¹³⁸ North, "The Development of Religious Pluralism," 177.

political institutions.¹³⁹ Cults were not separate religious units. The imperial cult appeared like and functioned as a traditional pagan cult, except that the object of honour was human, not divine, not semi-divine. There were rituals associated with the imperial cult,¹⁴⁰ personnel,¹⁴¹ even mysteries.¹⁴² This meant the incorporation of the imperial cult into Asia happened without much difficulty.

In the east, there were already traditions of ruler cults.¹⁴³ The divinisation of Hellenistic monarchs is known from an early inscription from Hierapolis.¹⁴⁴ Throughout Asia Minor the Seleukid and Attalid monarchs received cult worship during their lifetimes.¹⁴⁵

Did the people believe the emperor was actually a god, a θεὸς σεβαστός?¹⁴⁶ Rather more evidence exists for imperial cult priests offering sacrifices *on behalf of* emperors, not *to* emperors.¹⁴⁷ This distinction made it possible for a Jewish official to offer sacrifice in the imperial cult.¹⁴⁸ Offering sacrifice on behalf of an emperor was different from the direct offering to a god, as in a traditional cultic act. It means that imperial priests did not function in the same way as priests of other pagan cults. From this perspective, the emperor was not a god to whom sacrifice was made. Sacrifice to the gods on behalf of emperors was made to ensure their protection. Price says, “Language

¹³⁹ North, “The Development of Religious Pluralism,” 177. I will set out the appearance of traditional pagan cults more fully in Chapter Five.

¹⁴⁰ As described in detail in Price, *Rituals and Power*.

¹⁴¹ Julia Severa from Akmonia was a priest of the imperial cult. See Chapter Two. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 113; xxiv map 4 for distribution of evidence of imperial priests.

¹⁴² Pleket, “An Aspect of the Emperor Cult,” 331-47.

¹⁴³ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 23-40.

¹⁴⁴ *OGIS* no.308. This inscription from the second century BCE records an association of *strategoï* seeking to honour the Apollonis, mother of king Eumenes II.

¹⁴⁵ Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 59.

¹⁴⁶ σεβαστός, from σεβας, reverential awe, is the Greek word used for the imperial name ‘Augustus.’

¹⁴⁷ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 211; *MAMA* VII 492b, an example from Aphrodisias.

¹⁴⁸ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 221; Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, Vol. 1, 486; Vol. 2, 360-2. This only occurred early in the imperial era, before the revolt against the Romans in 66 CE.

sometimes assimilated the emperor to a god, but ritual held back.”¹⁴⁹ Anachronistic understandings of ‘emperor worship,’ and conflict between Christianity and the imperial cult, encouraged by Christian writers, has distorted practices of honouring emperors and overemphasised the deification which was granted on their deaths.¹⁵⁰

Apotheosis, the practice of deification of a leader was present before the establishment of the Roman Empire.¹⁵¹ The status of Hellenistic rulers was different than that bestowed on the emperor in his cult. The Hellenistic practice of sacrificing to rulers was far more obvious.¹⁵² Statue representations of Alexander the Great show him with eyes cast upwards to the heavens to indicate that he belonged to the realm of the divine more than the human. In these images projected outwards, and perhaps encouraged by the devotion of the people to their leader, Alexander’s achievements in leadership and conquest were so great that they were fitting of a god. Divine honour was the highest honour that could be bestowed upon a human being.¹⁵³

In the traditions of anthropomorphically imagined Olympian gods depicted through ancient Greek and Roman mythology, the gods acted with human values and aspirations.¹⁵⁴ It follows that the next step in deifying a high achieving human is taken. Alexander was deified because in the idealistic imagination of the Greeks he exemplified how

¹⁴⁹ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 213.

¹⁵⁰ Price, *Rituals and Power*, 125-6; *Acta Sanctorum* July III 629-45. This is an Armenian text translated by F. C. Conybeare, *The Armenian Apology and acts of Apollonius...* ² (1896) 103-21 at 105. This text relates to a second century conflict between the Christian belief of Phocas set against Africanus, a pagan governor of Pontus: “Are then the emperors not gods?” Phocas said, ‘Is it not enough for Trajan to be called king, without you also giving him the incomparable name?’” See also, Tertullian *De Spectaculis; De Idololatreia*. Price rightly adds that a subsequent preoccupation with naming irreconcilable conflict and polar opposition between Christianity and the imperial cult has been projected back onto the past.

¹⁵¹ On a description of imperial apotheosis for a Greek audience, see Herodian IV 2.

¹⁵² Price, *Rituals and Power*, 223.

¹⁵³ Pleket, “An Aspect of the Emperor Cult,” 333.

¹⁵⁴ Jealousy, rage, love, are some of the emotions of the Olympian gods expressed towards human beings as depicted throughout Graeco-Roman mythology. Physical size, super-human strength, divine powers and immortality separated the traditional gods from ordinary humans.

the gods behaved. Roman emperors were deified, usually after death, out of similar ideals. The Roman emperor was the epitome of mortal power and strength, the degree of which could not be emulated by ordinary people. For the inhabitants of the eastern provinces at the height of Roman expansion the emperor was the figurehead at the centre of the world. Imposing architectural monuments in cities such as the *sebasteia*, dedicated to the imperial cult, reflect the enormity of power of the person of the Roman emperor.¹⁵⁵

The imposition of the imperial cult was not a threat to the Hellenistic culture that deified Alexander. Devotion to the Roman emperor was merely an addition and expansion to what was already culturally acceptable.

In summary, the imperial cult in Asia Minor was an urban phenomenon that accompanied the cultural processes of Romanisation. The cult displayed similar features to other pagan cults, with the difference that the object of honour was a mortal being. It quickly became integrated into the structures of mainstream Hellenised cities. Political elements were significant in the cult, enabling especially wealthy elite Asians opportunities of upward social, political and economic mobility. The imperial cult thus has an important role in our understanding of the cultural environment of Asia Minor in the first three centuries.

4.9 Jews as urban cultural groups

Jewish groups were enduring in Asia Minor over the centuries. In this section, I apply the principles of assimilation theory to Jewish groups within the urban cultural environment to discern how and why they

¹⁵⁵ A magnificent example of a *sebasteion* is found in Aphrodisias. See selection of images in Kenan T. Erim, *Aphrodisias: A Guide to the Site and its Museum*, (Istanbul: Net Turistiik Yayınlar, 1989), 52-65.

remained enduring. I am looking for evidence of ethnic distinction, acculturating practices and integration within the structures of cities. Some of this work has been seen in the assessment of the assimilation of Jews in Akmonia in Chapter Two. I here look for evidence of Jews in urban communities further than one city.

Jews were cultural groups within Asia Minor, ethnically distinctive through religious and social practices. They were prominent in Asian cities as demonstrated through architecture,¹⁵⁶ literature, epigraphy and art,¹⁵⁷ even as they were minority groups within a wider Hellenistic cultural mainstream. Walter Ameling has assessed Jewish groups as minority groups within Asia Minor, and considers the various communities as more accurately representing the challenges of the dispersed experience than Jews in the larger urban environments of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch.¹⁵⁸ The Asian urban context was home to generations of dispersed Jews. It is impossible to estimate numbers, although from his study of inscriptions and archaeology, Ameling is confident to suggest Jews made up less than 5% of the population of Asia Minor.¹⁵⁹ The dispersed context was removed from the traditions of Palestinian Judaism through geographical distance and by immersion in the distinctive Asian cultural environment.¹⁶⁰

I have chosen to study Jews in urban settings not because I think they were solely urban dwellers, but because there is more evidence for

¹⁵⁶ The expansive synagogue complex at Sardis is evidence of a significant Jewish population able to participate in the cultural customs of their traditions.

¹⁵⁷ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 111: Jewish art began flourishing in late antiquity.

¹⁵⁸ Ameling, "Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien," 29-30.

¹⁵⁹ Ameling, "Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien," 30.

¹⁶⁰ I follow Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 8 who says it is analytically unhelpful to make comparisons between the experiences of dispersed Jews and Palestinian Jews. Collar, *Religious Networks*, 147 is also reserved about using evidence from Judaea, noting the complexity of the situation in that place. Mindful of these cautions, I make no attempt in this thesis to compare the expressions of Judaism in Asia with those in Palestine.

Jewish urban dwelling communities.¹⁶¹ Jews were represented in most Asian cities, and communities were especially notable in Karia, Lydia and Phrygia.¹⁶² In cities Jews were subjected to the influences of cultural Hellenism more than in rural settings.

Within modern scholarship, Jewish groups within the cultural matrix are frequently treated separately, or are avoided altogether.¹⁶³ Historically there has been a scholarly emphasis on conflict between pagans and Christians in the first three imperial centuries.¹⁶⁴ The tendency within Christian scholarship on this period is to downplay the importance of Jewish involvement in civic life, and the significant interaction between Jews and other cultural groups. This has created a gap in any appraisal of the cultural environment. This gap has started to be filled by scholars who note that the ‘parting of the ways’ between Jews and Christians took centuries,¹⁶⁵ beginning as Ameling suggests, from the the *fiscus Iudaicus* controlled by Vespasian.¹⁶⁶ Judaism and Christianity operated in a symbiotic relationship in these centuries. In this study, not only is the place of Jews recognised, but the place of other diversely represented pagan religions, which together created a unique and formative cultural milieu in the imperial era. It was never just about Christians against pagans.

¹⁶¹ For Jews in rural contexts see, Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1. See also Ameling, “Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien,” 31-2. Ameling reminds readers of the significant proportion of the population who existed as agricultural workers. This included Jews who worked the land and lived as small family groups.

¹⁶² See Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, on the spread of Jewish communities in cities; Ameling, “Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien,” especially 31.

¹⁶³ As noted in Chapter Three.

¹⁶⁴ As addressed in a few works, such as, Lieu, North, Rajak, *The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire*.

¹⁶⁵ Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 391.

¹⁶⁶ Ameling, “Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien,” 43-4.

4.9.1 Jewish ethnic distinction

Jewish cultural groups maintained ethnic distinction in many cases even as they were Hellenised urban dwellers, making them useful case studies in assimilation. Jewish groups were diverse in expression in the urban environment and variably assimilated with the cultural mainstream. Some groups reacted against the prevailing culture and became socially introverted.¹⁶⁷ Others, such as Titus Flavius Alexandros from Akmonia and Aurelios Symeonios, citizen and councillor of Sardis,¹⁶⁸ embraced cultural Hellenism and lived within its midst at an official level.¹⁶⁹

A large Jewish urban population lived in Sardis. They held a clearly designated residential and cultural district. The archaeological record shows that Jews were a powerful group in Sardis. Josephus reports that they were legally allowed to have a separate community there with judicial and religious rights.¹⁷⁰ In the decree to which Josephus refers, the ἀγοράνομοι, market officials, had to make sure there was a suitable supply of food for the Jewish population. This indicates that the same agora was used as everyone else, but there were specific supplies for Jews within it.¹⁷¹ It is not certain whether these rights referred only to the place of the large synagogue complex or to an actual segment of the city.¹⁷² It is important to question here that if the rights Josephus reports in the first century BCE referred to the

¹⁶⁷ Groups of Jews which followed the prohibitions on being exposed to non-Jews and idolaters, as set out in the *Abodah Zarah* of the Mishnah, would have been more introverted than those who engaged with the cultural mainstream in other contexts, such as the theatre or marketplace.

¹⁶⁸ *IJO* 133.

¹⁶⁹ Collar, *Religious Networks*, 155 suggests that such Jews holding civic office expected their position in the Jewish community would be strengthened by their public office.

¹⁷⁰ Josephus *Antiquities*, 14.259-61. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 331.

¹⁷¹ Perhaps like today's supermarkets and food courts where halal, vegan, gluten free and dairy free options are available within the same food areas.

¹⁷² Jews were permitted to establish synagogues in Asia Minor from the first century BCE according to Josephus *Antiquities*, 14.258.

synagogue itself, then to what extent did they apply when the building became active as a synagogue?¹⁷³ Perhaps it is more likely that Josephus was referring to Jews in Sardis living in a designated section of the city and that the rights applied to them there before the period the synagogue became prominent.

Jews in Sardis showed high integration and acculturation into the Hellenised urban environment. They had the political power and social acceptance from at least the first century BCE to work to obtain the impressive synagogue building, and the economic means to maintain and develop it over the subsequent centuries.¹⁷⁴ Like leading Jews in Akmonia, socially and economically mobile Jews maintained ethnic distinction despite their integration with the civic structures of Sardis.

At one extreme of Jewish diversity were those who were so completely assimilated that they can no longer be identified as Jewish from their practices. Included in this minority are those who participated in non-Jewish cult, extreme social climbers,¹⁷⁵ exogamy, isolated Jews, Jewish slaves and some Christian Jews.¹⁷⁶

In the example of exogamy, when a Jewish person married outside of tradition, the scope for following a strict Jewish life was compromised. This is part of the amalgamating subprocess of assimilation. The desire for upward social mobility led some Jews to abandon their traditional lifestyle. The Jewish royal Berenice became the consort of the emperor Titus.¹⁷⁷ To what degree she departed from Judaism is unknown, but given the status of Titus, it is reasonable to presume a

¹⁷³ See Chapter Two section 2.8 n. 115 on the various proposed building dates of the synagogue in Sardis.

¹⁷⁴ Kraabel, “Υψιστος,” 87.

¹⁷⁵ Such as Berenice and Drusilla. See paragraph below.

¹⁷⁶ See Chapter Two on complete assimilation.

¹⁷⁷ Tacitus *Histories*, 2.2.1; Cassius Dio 66.15.3-4.

high level of assimilation into Graeco-Roman culture.¹⁷⁸ Drusilla, the sister of Berenice and Agrippa II left her husband to marry Felix, Roman procurator of Judaea. Josephus cites this arrangement as outside of traditional Jewish law.¹⁷⁹

Timothy, from the Acts of the Apostles, had a Jewish mother who married a Greek.¹⁸⁰ Timothy was uncircumcised, and from the abandonment of this significant ethnic distinctive it is likely that other Jewish religious practices were not part of family life in his household. These public figures are examples of Jews so assimilated that they gave up core ethnic identity. They are rare in the evidence of Jewish assimilation.

The public positions of some Jews might have required participation in non-Jewish cult, including the imperial cult, as discussed above. Despite the official permission given Jews to abstain from activities which interfered with their religious laws, it cannot be assumed that special arrangements were made to accommodate Jews in public positions in every case. Barclay cites three examples of undoubted participation in pagan cult.¹⁸¹

The third of Barclay's examples, from the first century CE records that in Antioch in Syria, Antiochos, who was most likely a member of the Roman army, accused his father, who was a magistrate in the Jewish community, of plotting against the city, along with other leading

¹⁷⁸ Josephus *Bellum Iudaicum* 2.313-14 describes Berenice as 'pious.' However, she and her brother were raised in Rome, and Josephus' desire for Roman favour is important to note in his estimation of Berenice.

¹⁷⁹ Josephus *Antiquities*, 20.143.

¹⁸⁰ Acts 16.1-3.

¹⁸¹ *CIJ* 1.82 a third century BCE inscription from Oropos in Greece of a certain Moschos who identified as Ἰουδαῖος and who had a dream via Amphiaraos and Hygeia relating to the manumission of a slave. He erected the inscription in a temple of Amphiaraos; *IJO* 21 from the second century BCE in Iasos in Asia a Niketas, son of Jason from Jerusalem, contributed 100 drachmae to a Dionysiac festival. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 322 assumes Niketas participated in the festivities he helped to fund. These first two references are remote from the centuries being studied here. The paucity of examples affirms that complete assimilation of Jews to the religious mainstream was rare.

Jews.¹⁸² Under pressure from mounting charges of revolutionary action from the Jews, Antiochos renounced his Jewish heritage. He did this most publicly by participating in pagan sacrifice, which according to Josephus further inflamed the Jews. Whilst this is not an Asian example, it is a valuable and rare reference to how completely assimilated some Jews became.

Only in extreme situations created by amalgamation and social status was ethnic distinction compromised. This was likely to be the experience of Jewish slaves and those who married into a pagan family. When ethnic distinction blurred, Jewish identity became secondary to Hellenistic cultural identity. Largely it seems Jewish communities did try to preserve and defend an ethnic and ancestral tradition as their way of life.¹⁸³ This was the experience of Jews in Sardis and other cities.

The fact that Jewish communities such as those at Sardis and Akmonia were distinct and long lasting but still recognisably Jewish, with Jewish representation in civic structures, indicates that ethnicity was not eradicated with cultural assimilation. This supports the presentation in this thesis that the assimilation of minority cultural groups in Asia Minor was mostly a positive process that permitted the preservation of core group distinctions.

In most situations, Jewish people were ethnically distinct through social and religious practices. These practices were based around Sabbath observance, circumcision of males, festival keeping, protocols around sexual cleanness, dietary and hygiene rules,¹⁸⁴ and refusal to worship other gods. These things acted as boundary markers between Jewish culture and the mainstream. The level of commitment to these

¹⁸² Josephus *Bellum Iudaicum*, 7.47-53.

¹⁸³ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 278.

¹⁸⁴ Rajak, "Jewish Community," 19. Rajak refers to S. J. D. Cohen, "Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew," *HTR* 82, 1 (1989) regarding a spectrum of Jewish interaction with wider society.

things in relation to the value placed on cultural Hellenisation is an indication of assimilation.

Whilst Jewish communities were diverse, and assimilated in various measure to the surrounding mainstream, there were still common understandings of behavioural limits.¹⁸⁵ These limits acted as boundaries and contributed to ethnic distinction. Each Jewish community stood alone, but was connected to the rest. They were diverse, but can be identified as distinctly Jewish by the observable practices noted above.

Apollonios Molon, who was a member of the Hellenistic elite, born in Karia, who taught rhetoric in Rhodes, was familiar with Jewish customs and biblical background, as evidenced in Eusebios,¹⁸⁶ but was also antagonistic toward the Jews.¹⁸⁷ Apollonios named an exclusivist attitude among the Jews whom he said refused to worship the gods others did, or to accept people with different ideas about god, who refrained from social activities with people holding different customs.¹⁸⁸ This report indicates that some Jews did maintain distance from others and that it caused offence.

Although rabbinic Judaism in the period following the destruction of the temple in 70 CE expressed conservatism,¹⁸⁹ Jews did engage with other groups at significant levels without compromising their ethnic distinction.¹⁹⁰ This supports Tessa Rajak's position that Jews were not segregated in the dispersed communities of the Mediterranean.¹⁹¹ It

¹⁸⁵ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 85.

¹⁸⁶ Eusebios *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 9.19.1-3.

¹⁸⁷ Josephus *Contra Apionem* Book 2, responds to Apollonios' Jewish references. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 272.

¹⁸⁸ Josephus *Contra Apionem* 2.79, 258.

¹⁸⁹ Rabbinic Judaism emerged following the destruction of the temple. Conservatism is reflected in rabbinic writings such as the Sifra: see Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 125; Collar, *Religious Networks*, 146-47.

¹⁹⁰ As Ameling, "Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien," 43, who notes that Jews did not live in isolation from pagans and from Christian groups.

¹⁹¹ Rajak, "Jewish Community."

also affirms my understanding that assimilation into the Hellenistic mainstream did not necessarily affect ethnic distinction among Jews. The significant interaction between Jews and wider culture proposed by Rajak suggests that Judaism was not a closed institution.¹⁹² The assimilation of Jews is an expected response to the necessity of living within interdependent human communities. As the Jewish experience indicates, assimilation did not equate with loss of ethnic distinction, except in extreme situations.

Food, food handling and hygiene were factors of Judaism that might appear to imply segregation. Again, this was not necessarily the case. Importantly Rajak discerns that despite boundaries around food handling and types of food eaten, for Jews cultural engagement around eating was not disqualified.¹⁹³ The fact that Jews were prepared to make alternative arrangements to participate in social eating with other groups indicates that they were actively and positively involved in the life of the cultural mainstream, even if they maintained ethnic boundaries around food preparation and types of food eaten.

Assimilation of cultural groups with each other and with the mainstream happened at the boundaries of interaction. These were the spaces of acculturation and integration, of sharing ideas, language, dialogue, common culture. (See Fig. 5 below) The boundary between the Hellenistic cultural mainstream (blue area) and the zone of acculturation and integration (yellow area), and the boundary between the zone of acculturation and integration and the Jewish minority group (dark pink area), were fluid. The dashed line borders of these zones represent the fluidity of the zones. This enabled interaction to occur and diversity between Jewish communities.

¹⁹² Rajak, "Jewish Community," 25.

¹⁹³ Rajak, "Jewish Community," 18 says that, "A community's eating habits are a major social distinguishing mark."

Further inside the buffer of the Jewish group boundary (light pink area), core group distinction and dissimilation was maintained through the preservation of defining Jewish practices.

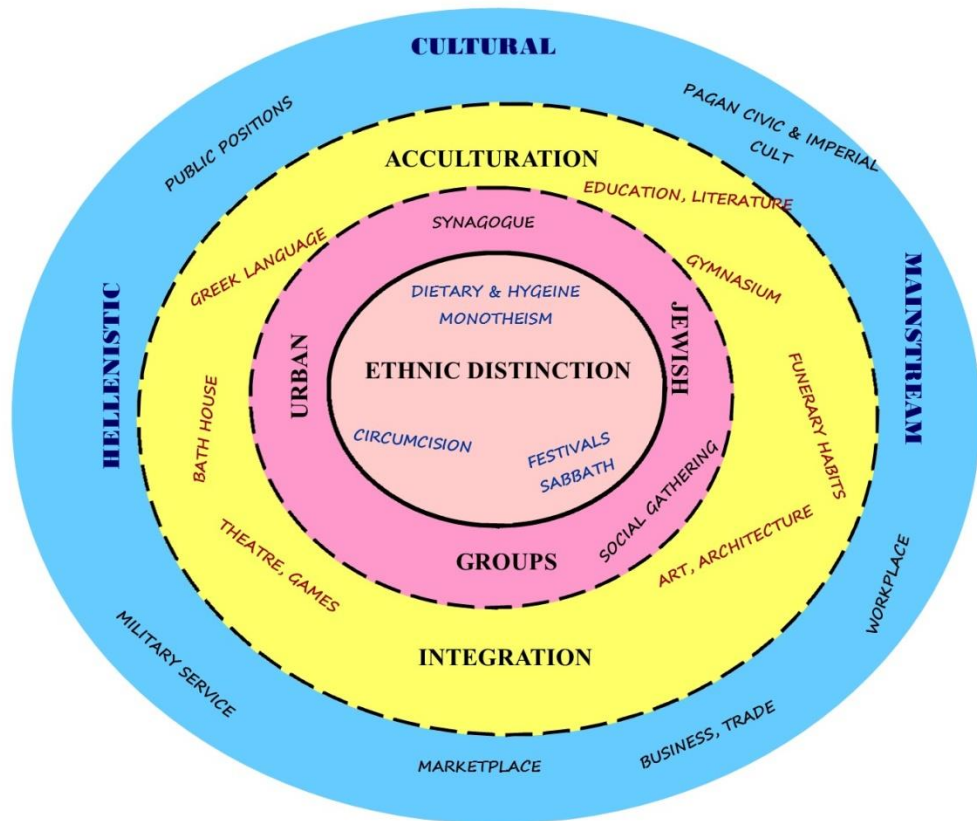


Figure 5 Urban Jewish Group Assimilation Model

This diagram develops the basic assimilation theory model (Fig. 2) to represent the assimilation of Jewish groups in an urban Hellenistic environment. Within the blue zone of the Hellenistic cultural mainstream Jews may hold public positions, serve in the armed forces, engage in work and business. This zone is the place of pagan cult and civic duties associated with honouring the emperor. A permeable boundary line separates the yellow zone of acculturation and integration. Common Greek language, education, cultural practices such as bathing and public entertainment are engaged with by Jews in this zone. Sharing occurs in the areas of funerary habits and art and architecture. The dark pink zone is the space of urban dwelling Jews as a minority group. This zone also has a permeable boundary. Within it exist the specifically Jewish institution of the synagogue, which may be open to non-Jews. It is also the space for social gathering with non-Jews, while still maintaining Jewish laws. An impermeable boundary separates the light pink inner zone. Within it are the ethnic distinctions with which Jews make no cultural compromise.

Barclay writes of Jews living in dispersed communities: “On the whole, the patterns of life we have observed in the Mediterranean Diaspora suggest that Jews were neither socially and culturally isolated nor simply blended into some social amalgam.”¹⁹⁴ This supports Ameling’s position that Asian Jewish communities were fully engaged with the wider environment.¹⁹⁵ In an assimilation model, boundaries were maintained which facilitated social interaction, yet enabled religious identity. The zones and the boundary areas separating them supports that assimilation was variable. Between each Jewish community there were different possibilities of expression of acculturation and integration. This contributed to diversity between Jewish groups, even as religious distinction was common.¹⁹⁶

The model for assessing the assimilation of urban Jewish communities in Asia as described indicates the caution necessary in dealing with sources antagonistic to Jews such as Apollonios Molon. Sources like this can colour the evidence toward introversion where the facts might be different. The kind of support for the Jewish community like that supplied by Julia Severa who was patron of the synagogue in Akmonia indicates significant social interaction between Jews and non-Jews, as well as commonalities across occupations, interests and social networks.¹⁹⁷ A great deal of social interaction between Jewish leaders and Julia Severa and her family would have taken place in the prelude to the building of the synagogue. Social interaction invariably involved food and eating in the ancient world, which supports Rajak’s suggestion that Jews were not segregated and were prepared to be involved in communal activities around meals. Occasions such as social meals provided opportunities for upward mobility.

¹⁹⁴ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 329.

¹⁹⁵ Ameling, “Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien,” 48.

¹⁹⁶ See Ameling, “Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien,” 35 on the diversity of Jewish communities in different cities.

¹⁹⁷ See Chapter Two on Julia and her relationship with the Jews of Akmonia.

For Jews, Sabbath observance identified them as distinct groups within a wider, non-Sabbath observing society. In the first century BCE, in the financially stressful era for Asia Minor preceding the *pax romana* initiated by Augustus, the granting of Jewish Sabbath privileges and ethnic exemptions by Romans to secure support in Judaea caused resentment among the non-Jewish populations.¹⁹⁸ Jewish Roman citizens claimed exemption from serving in the legions recruited for the Roman civil wars because of their requirement to observe the Sabbath.¹⁹⁹ Jews from Rome were sent to Sardinia in 19 CE, but Barclay suggests they may have served in Jewish units.²⁰⁰ These units were likely to have observed Sabbath and dietary restrictions.²⁰¹ Jews in the Roman army serving in regular units may have become more assimilated because of the close community of soldiers who did not share Jewish customs. Josephus records discontent in Asia when Jews did not participate in public events which happened on the Sabbath.²⁰² Jews also held positions in which they conducted business in court, but Josephus says, not on a Sabbath.²⁰³

Circumcised Jewish males would have been obvious in the Hellenistic environment of bath and gymnasium. The representation of associations of Jewish ἐφήβοι, *ephebes*, gives evidence of integration.²⁰⁴ *Ephebes* were youths engaged in the gymnasium, gaining athletic and military training as well as intellectual and cultural learning.²⁰⁵ The gymnasium was a central part of social life, at least for men, in a

¹⁹⁸ Josephus *Antiquities*, 14.267; Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 74.

¹⁹⁹ Josephus *Antiquities*, 14.238-40, 223-27; Ameling, "Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien," 49.

²⁰⁰ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 325.

²⁰¹ But see 1 Macc 2.41 which records the decision to go into battle on the Sabbath rather than suffer as other Jews had suffered by hiding on the Sabbath.

²⁰² Josephus *Antiquities*, 14.241-43, 244-46, 256-58, 262-64.

²⁰³ Josephus *Antiquities*, 14.262-64; 16.27, 45.

²⁰⁴ Ameling, "Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien," 52 on the representation of Jewish youths as *ephebes* in the gymnasium as evidence of Jewish participation in mainstream culture.

²⁰⁵ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 176-7.

Greek city. From Iasos in Asia is inscriptional evidence of a Ἰούδας Εὐόδου, Judas son of Euodos, an *ephebe*.²⁰⁶ Another inscription referring to a body of Jewish *ephebes* comes from Hypaipa, south of Sardis: Ἰουδα[ί]ων νεωτέρων, of younger Jews.²⁰⁷ This may indicate that the young men were graduates of the gymnasium but still Jewish in identity.²⁰⁸ As *neoteroi* they formed an association. Associations of graduated *ephebes* met to exercise and participate in civil and political activities. The inscription from Hypaipa suggests that this association of *neoteroi* were all Jewish, formed in the gymnasium.

There is however, only one inscription recording the involvement of a Jew in Greek athletic contests, the ἀγών. From Hierapolis a certain Hikesios, a Jew, is named ἐνδουνοξοτάτου ἱερωνίκου πλιστονίκου,²⁰⁹ the most highly reputable victor in very many sacred games, on his epitaph. Competitors in athletic games would have been exposed to a high level of Hellenistic culture, including sacrificial rites to pagan gods. It seems from this example that Hikesios not only participated in the games, but achieved multiple victories. He is nonetheless clearly defined as Jewish in his memorial. This shows a high level of acculturation and integration of a Jewish person into the Hellenistic

²⁰⁶ *IJO* 22; Louis Robert, “Un corpus des inscriptions juives,” *REJ* 101 (1937a): 85-6; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 177 n. 40; Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 271 n. 31.

²⁰⁷ *IJO* 47.

²⁰⁸ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 327; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 177.

²⁰⁹ *IJO* 189: ἡ σορὸς καὶ τὸ ἡρῶν προγονικὸν Ἰκεσίου τοῦ [καὶ] Ἰούδα | τοῦ Θεώνος [ἐνδ]ο[ξ]ο[τά]του ἱερωνίκου πλιστονίκου, ἐν ἧ κηδευθήσεται Ἰκέσιος καὶ Ἰολυμπίας Θεοκρίτου ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ· ἔξουσι ἡς ἐξουσίαν τὰ τέκα [αὐτῶν] | Ἀντωνίνος καὶ Ἰκέσιος, ἄλλω δὲ οὐκ ἐξέσται κηδεῦσέ τινα ἢ ἀποτίσι προστίμου | τ[ῆ] γερουσία (δηνάρια) ,B. ταύτης τῆς ἐπιγραφῆς ἀντίγραφον κ[εῖται ἐν] | [τοῖς ἀρχείοις] – *The sarcophagus and family tomb are of Hikesios who is also (a Jew/Ioudas) son of Theon, who is the most highly reputable victor in very many sacred games, in it will be buried Hikesios and Olympia the daughter of Theokritos, his wife; their children Antoninos and Hikesios have authority, and no one shall be able to bury another or they will pay a penalty to the gerousia of 2000 denarii. A copy of this inscription lies in the archives.* Although there is confusion over whether Hikesios is referred to as Ioudas or a *Ioudaios* in the text, I concur with Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 76 that Hikesios is a Jew.

cultural mainstream and the civic structures of *gerousia* and the archives.

There were other non-Jewish writers than Apollonios Molon who refer to the ethnic identity of Jews. Strabo calls Jewish migration a tribal movement.²¹⁰ Cicero calls Jews a *natio*, tribe or race,²¹¹ Seneca and Tacitus refer to them as *gens*, race, people; family.²¹² These ascriptions indicate a distinct group, recognised as so by outsiders. Cassius Dio accepted that some people who were not Jews by birth appeared to follow Jewish practices and could be called Jews, but he still refers to the whole Jewish people as γένος, race.²¹³ Cassius Dio, a native of Bithynia, spent much of his life in the Asian province and would have been well familiar with the presence of Jews integrated in the cities. In his estimation, their customs were ethnic in character and not just a religious expression.

Others who followed Jewish practices in Asia but were not born into Judaism numbered among groups known as *theosebeis*, god-worshippers, and φοβοῦμενοι/σεβόμενοι τὸν θεόν, god-fearers. These provide evidence of assimilation of groups and will be discussed separately.²¹⁴

4.9.2 Jewish material culture

²¹⁰ φύλον, tribe. Strabo cited in Josephus *Antiquities* 14.115.

²¹¹ Cicero *De Provinviis Consularibus* 5.10.

²¹² Seneca, in Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 6.11; Tacitus, *Histories* 5.4.1.

²¹³ Cassius Dio 37.16.5-17-1: ἢ τε γὰρ χώρα Ἰουδαία καὶ αὐτοὶ Ἰουδαῖοι ὠνομάδονται· ἢ δὲ ἐπίκλησις αὕτη ἐκείνοις μὲν οὐκ οἶδ' ὅθεν ἤρξατο γενέσθαι, φέρει δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦς ἄλλοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὅσοι τὰ νόμιμα αὐτῶν, καίπερ ἄλλοεθνεῖς ὄντες, ζηλοῦσι. καὶ ἔστι καὶ παρὰ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις τὸ γένος τοῦτο, κολουσθέν μὲν πολλάκις, ἀυξηθὲν δὲ ἐπὶ πλείστον, ὥστε καὶ ἐς παρρησίαν τῆς νομίσεως ἐκνικῆσαι – *for the country is Judaea and the people named Judaeans; I do not know from what source this title came about or when it began, but as many as emulate their customs even among other people, although being of another nation, bear the name; and this race is among the Romans, although having been cut down many times, it has been much increased, so that it has achieved freespokenness of its customs.*

²¹⁴ See Chapter Seven.

Despite varying degrees of ethnicity among Jewish groups, there was no distinct Jewish material culture.²¹⁵ Jewish material culture was absorbed from the Hellenistic urban environment. This indicates that Judaism was closer culturally to Hellenism than to Romanism, which as Woolf has said, valued material culture as part of self-definition.²¹⁶ Levine writes of Jewish material culture:

“Thus, since the Jewish people never had a unique material culture of their own, contemporary culture largely determined how they built their homes, city walls, streets, and public buildings (including the two Jerusalem Temples and, later on, their synagogues), what sorts of decorations they used, how they made their eating utensils, what clothes they wore, and how they buried their dead.”²¹⁷

This definition assists with the interpretation of funerary monuments in Akmonia, discussed in Chapter Two. For Jews, the choice of tomb for burial was likely a choice of necessity.²¹⁸ This would be especially the case with less wealthy people who did not have the means to make choices based on decoration or overall aesthetics, but had to make do with whatever was current in the marketplace.

It appears that for Jews, like cultural Greeks, material culture did not define ethnic or cultural identity. With very little of their own architectural or artistic tradition outside of some symbols that came about in late antiquity,²¹⁹ Jews made use of Graeco-Roman decorations and symbols in synagogues, at least in the first and second centuries CE.²²⁰ The use of these symbols indicated a willing participation in the wider culture because the mainstream cultural symbols did not reflect

²¹⁵ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 5.

²¹⁶ Woolf, “Becoming Roman, Staying Greek,” 120.

²¹⁷ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 23.

²¹⁸ Ameling, “Die jüdischen Gemeinden im antiken Kleinasien,” 52 names tomb styles as an indicator of Jewish participation in mainstream culture.

²¹⁹ See however, a recent find from beyond Asia Minor of the distinguishing Jewish symbol of the menorah found in a first century CE synagogue from ancient Migdal in Galilee. M. Aviam, “The Decorated Stone from the Synagogue at Migdal: A Holistic Interpretation and a Glimpse into the Life of Galilean Jews at the Time of Jesus,” *NT* 55 (2013): 205-20.

²²⁰ Snyder, “Interaction of Jews with Non-Jews,” 80-81.

ethnic identity. Symbols and decorations, along with other material culture reflect the acculturative capacity of Judaism.

Specific Jewish material tradition in Asia Minor came later, after the third century. New distinguishing symbols then featured in synagogue decoration.²²¹ Pagan symbols were used comfortably in the first three centuries even if they were not assimilated into the Jewish culture.²²² In cultural terms they served as mere decoration rather than having inherent symbolic meaning. Some symbols, such as the rosette, were used as both pagan and Jewish decorations.²²³ Neither did those recognisably Jewish symbols transfer to the Graeco-Roman religious traditions.

Christians on the other hand did express themselves to the wider world by their adoption and adaptation of symbols from the mainstream culture.²²⁴ This infers that Christians identified more closely with Roman than Hellenistic culture.

From the middle of the second century CE Jewish stance on dealing with the presence of Graeco-Roman images and material culture became even more flexible in order to navigate life in the Asian urban

²²¹ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 156. The distinguishing symbols include the menorah, lulav, ethrog, shofar and incense shovels. A beautiful mosaic panel from the fourth century CE Hammat Tiberias synagogue contains these symbols surrounding a torah ark. A menorah is a seven-branched candelabrum; a lulav the branches of palm trees; an ethrog is fruit of good trees; a shofar is a ram's horn blown on ceremonial days. Snyder, "Interaction of Jews with Non-Jews," 79-80 also includes a torah shrine as a distinctive Jewish symbol, at least in the Roman catacombs. It is to be noted that the recent discovery of the decorated stone in the Migdal synagogue depicting a menorah and other symbols reflecting the temple, preceded the later use of temple symbols in third to sixth century CE synagogue decorations. This included the Hammat Tiberias synagogue. See Aviam, "Decorated Stone from the Synagogue at Migdal," 216.

²²² Pagan symbols included: grapevine, birds, amphorae, eagle, flowers, lions, rosette, shell and wreath. Snyder, "Interaction of Jews with Non-Jews," 78-9 says that in Rome these symbols are found in Jewish contexts.

²²³ Aviam, "Decorated Stone from the Synagogue at Migdal," 213-14 suggests that the rosette was the most common decoration in Jewish art, and at 214, that the rosette on the decorated stone from the synagogue at Migdal in Galilee had celestial symbolism.

²²⁴ Snyder, "Interaction of Jews with Non-Jews," 89-90.

environment. There was greater openness to expression through art,²²⁵ although this was not exclusive.²²⁶ Some rabbinic teaching was directly opposed to the mainstream pagan culture. The midrash *Sifra* warns against taking up pagan fashion.²²⁷ These rabbis were religious leaders however, and we may not make conclusions about the practice of ordinary people from their stance, neither the degree to which the rabbinic teaching was known or followed. The Mishnah text *Abodah Zarah* deals extensively with the issues of idols and pagan religion and how Jews may live within this wider cultural context.

4.9.3 Summing up urban Jews and Jewish ethnic distinction

The evidence of Jews as urban cultural groups is extensive. The evidence suggests that Jews were well assimilated into the mainstream, but also ethnically distinct. Numerically Jews were minority groups in urban settings. In cities such as Sardis, great buildings lie as memorials to Jewish integration within Hellenistic city structures. The Graeco-Roman institution of the gymnasium had Jewish members, which is a further indication of assimilation with the cultural mainstream. Jews in influential positions such as Titus Flavius Alexandros of Akmonia reveal that social and political mobility through urban structures was possible for Jews.

A diversity of expression of Judaism is found in Asia Minor. These range from a few who were so completely assimilated as to be

²²⁵ *m. Abodah Zarah* 3.4 gives the example of Rabban Gamaliel in Akko who was challenged by the philosopher Peroklos while bathing in a bathhouse ornamented with the image of Aphrodite. His reply was that the ornamentation belonged to 'their gods' and that the fact that one urinated in a trough beneath the image was proof that it was not his god. The story is dated to between 100-120 CE according to Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 107.

²²⁶ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 106-7 provides a contrasting example of attitude toward figural representations in *Masekhet Bahodesh* 6, H. S. Horovitz and I. A. Rabin eds. *Mechilta D'Rabbi Ismael*, (Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrman, 1960), 224-25 which is a harsh condemnation of imagery.

²²⁷ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 125, citing *Sifre-Deuteronomy* 81, ed. L. Finkelstein, (Reprinted New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1969), 147.

unidentifiable as Jews to those who were culturally introverted. On the high end of assimilation were those Jews who participated in exogamy and Jewish slaves. On the lower end of assimilation were the Jews who shunned society named by Apollonios Molon. Most Jewish people existed on the spectrum of variability in between. As urban groups, they were recognised as different through special customs and religious beliefs.

Jews were recognised in the Roman army and sought exemptions to uphold customs around the Sabbath, as reported by Josephus. This indicates that Jewish religious requirements were well known. In addition to Sabbath observance, Jewish ethnicity was notable around food, food hygiene and practices such as circumcision. Again, these marked Jews as different from mainstream Asian Greeks and Romans. Jews made provision for these practices and for the most part did not exclude themselves from participation in social and political life.

Urban Jews were in the first three centuries highly acculturated in material culture. They made use of pagan art and decorations, building styles, clothing and burial customs. These things were not seen as essential to Jewish identity. Specific artistic style came later.

In this study of urban Jews acculturating and integrative practices have been shown. These enabled Jews and the Jewish communities to participate in wider Hellenistic culture. Equally, evidence of ethnic distinction has been shown despite the high level of engagement with civic structures. In summary, Jews in cities were positively assimilated into the culture in which they were immersed.

4.10 Summing up the urban cultural environment

The urban cultural environment in Asia Minor differed from the rural in that it was dominated by cultural Hellenisation. Mainstream

Hellenisation was the culture of Graeco-Roman pagans. Minority groups such as Jews and Christians participated in this culture in the ordinary course of daily life. The degree to which these minority groups were Hellenised indicates their levels of assimilation. As shown above, their assimilation did not result in loss of ethnic distinction.

The impact of Romanisation on the Hellenistic urban environment did not affect cultural Hellenisation to any significant degree. The Hellenistic city incorporated Roman architectural changes and statuary in togas readily. This was due to the difference in the value of material culture held between Romans and Greeks. Neither did changes in bathing habits and spectatorship at gladiatorial games adversely affect Hellenistic cultural identity. These things contributed to the unique appearance of the eastern cultural environment as opposed to the west. In this environment, cultural engagement happened at the boundary areas between groups.

The figurehead of the Roman emperor was representative of Roman authority throughout the empire, and the imperial cult took its place within pagan political and religious life. The imperial cult was more prominent in the cities than country. In cities, civic and religious activities, and public ceremonial events included honouring of the emperor and sacrifice on behalf of the emperor.

The urban environment was made up of a mix of groups of people from different backgrounds. These people gathered informally under the banner of cultural Hellenisation.

4.11 Conclusion – the cultural environment of Asia Minor in the first three centuries

The cultural environment of Asia Minor has been established as a complex place which accommodated multiple groups of people. The umbrella of cultural Hellenisation allowed space for the maintenance

of group distinction. It provided for the emergence of new ideas, especially in the spaces between cultural groups. The cultural environment supported difference between rural and urban groups. The rural setting was home to many and varied indigenous minority groups gathered around pagan cults and the central space of the rural temple. Assimilative resistance to Hellenisation and Romanisation characterised these groups. Erosion of indigenous groups happened over time. Urban pagans were highly Hellenised and Roman cultural impact did not undermine their Hellenisation. Minority group Jews were well assimilated into Hellenistic cities, but maintained ethnic distinction. Christians similarly lived in this environment.

I have examined the interaction of these diverse groups in this chapter through assimilation processes. The cultural environment as established does provides a context, a matrix, for discussion in the following chapters on the development of a new religious situation and the emergence of expressions of a highest god.

5. THE NEW RELIGIOUS SITUATION IN ASIA MINOR

The setting out of the cultural environment of Asia Minor in the last chapter prepares the way for discussion on religious change in this chapter. I first describe tradition pagan religion as the expression of mainstream Hellenisation. From this I explore religious change in the cultural environment and draw out the religious attitude found beyond the margins of mainstream culture. I look for evidence of the contribution of the individual to change, then identify new religious groups. I present the response to religious change in a minority group setting through the practices of transgression, confession and penance.

This chapter uncovers the background to the monotheistic attitude that arose in parts of Asia Minor in response to the presence of new religious groups and the new situation that resulted. The findings of this study open the way for discussion on the monotheistic expressions that emerged in minority group religious activity, and that the cultural environment itself enabled the religious change which supported monotheistic attitudes.

I have borrowed the term “new religious situation” from John North.¹ This term sums up the position created by the assimilative interrelationships between the cultural groups described in the last chapter. It is the starting point from which new religious expressions emerged.

¹ North, “Development of Religious Pluralism,” 174-193 refers throughout the chapter on the new religious situation brought about by the rise of a new type of cult.

5.1 The face of traditional paganism

Before discussing the movement away from traditional religion and the development of new groups, I analyse the appearance of traditional pagan religion in the Roman Empire. This prepares for discussion of religious change. Traditional pagan groups made up mainstream religion, especially in the Hellenised cities of Asia. John North has established that religion was not a defining aspect of distinction for pagans, as it was for Jews and Christians. This is because pagan religion was embedded within the structures of mainstream society.² Embedded religion was static, unmoving, part of the fundamental structure around which human communities were built. Change from this static state was a gradual process beginning as early as the second century BCE. From that time, new types of cults appeared which generated different worship patterns and new levels of interest and commitment.³ This change continued into the fourth century CE when Christianity became the dominant religion throughout the Roman Empire.⁴ In fact the period from about 200 BCE to 200 CE may be characterised by the emergence of multiple different religious groups.⁵

Even the status of traditional paganism as a religion is disputed, at least during the imperial era before there became conflict with Christianity.⁶ It was not until the fourth century CE that paganism as a distinctive religious movement with developed theology came about,⁷ encouraged by the leading figure of the Roman emperor Julian (361-63

² North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 178-9.

³ The example of the introduction of the mystery cult of Bacchus/Dionysos into Rome upset the Roman Senate because its following could not be controlled, its rituals were not made public. The cult incurred vicious reprisal throughout Italy. See North, "Religious Toleration," 85-96; Rodney Stark, "Religious Competition and Roman Piety," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 2 (2006): 15-17; North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 183.

⁴ Stark, "Religious Competition," 25: 50% people in the Roman Empire were Christian by the middle of the fourth century CE.

⁵ North, "Religious Toleration," 96.

⁶ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 187.

⁷ Mitchell and Van Nuffelen, *One God*, 14.

CE). Julian tried to build pagan religion as a cultural concept with intellectual and artistic aspects as a counter to Christianity.⁸ This was a very different aspect of paganism. It is better described as a ‘new paganism,’ which belonged to a specific period, rather than traditional, embedded pagan religion. The theological and philosophical developments in new paganism lie beyond the scope of this study.

There was in traditional paganism little literature, written instruction concerning ritual or religious matters, or doctrine of worship. When acts of worship towards a specific deity happened it usually involved an occasional animal sacrifice followed by a banquet.⁹ Stark comments on the absence of emotion in traditional paganism.¹⁰ He especially notes that there was no love in acts of worship, either from human beings directed toward the god, or any perception of love from the god to human beings.¹¹

Within traditional paganism there were no organised systems of beliefs which members were asked to commit to, no religious authority structure, no set of ideas beyond family and political context.¹² Traditional religion did not offer moral direction or personal fulfillment. It was in fact, based upon gods who were flawed in the very same way as human beings.¹³ The gods of tradition engaged in immoral behaviour, they regarded human beings merely for convenience. Graeco-Roman mythology abounds with stories of the immoral and cruel behaviour of the gods towards human beings.

In traditional paganism, there were no differentiated religious institutions or identifiable religious groups based on popular membership. The idea of choice in religion was not the experience of

⁸ North, “Development of Religious Pluralism,” 188.

⁹ Stark, “Religious Competition,” 10.

¹⁰ Stark, “Religious Competition,” 10.

¹¹ Stark, “Religious Competition,” 9.

¹² North, “Development of Religious Pluralism,” 187.

¹³ Stark, “Religious Competition,” 10-11.

the people who inherited the traditions of paganism. Religion itself did not provide power or influence. Power and influence were linked to city or family.¹⁴ It was from within these cultural allegiances that religious identification was formed. Freedom in religious allegiance came with the breaking down of religion as embedded and changeless.

In social science terms the movement from monopolised religion to a place where there arose differentiated groups with their own systems of belief, the opportunity of personal choice in joining, and the requirement for commitment in return, is known as “marketplace religion.”¹⁵ The development of the religious situation into one of the marketplace created a pluralistic environment.¹⁶ Stark even suggests that religious pluralism is the “*natural* state of any religious economy.”¹⁷ This statement suggests that there are different needs within communities which are fulfilled by different groups offering different things. The cultural environment in which religion is set must be open to change for the needs of people to be expressed and to have opportunities for these needs to be met. The work of the previous chapter shows that the cultural environment of Asia Minor was receptive to a new religious situation through the assimilative interaction of multiple groups.

The freedom of a religious marketplace provided opportunities for people to explore new cults or to move into already established cults such as Judaism. Within traditional, embedded paganism, people did not usually leave the cult they were identified with through the cultural allegiances of family and city to join another religious group. People stayed even though there was nothing formally in place to

¹⁴ North, “Development of Religious Pluralism,” 177.

¹⁵ Stark, “Religious Competition,” 4-5; Lieu, North, Rajak, “Jews among Pagans and Christians,” 4, and throughout the book look at religious movement toward a marketplace model. See also North, “Development of Religious Pluralism,” 178-9.

¹⁶ Even though polytheistic paganism was pluralistic in terms of honouring multiple deities, it was not pluralistic in the sense of supporting multiple differentiated groups within it.

¹⁷ Stark, “Religious Competition,” 5.

prevent people from worshipping whichever god they chose to follow in various situations.¹⁸

Cicero said that people should only worship gods who had been publicly accepted.¹⁹ This did not include foreign gods, new gods or private gods. The Athenians opposed new gods and cults, which was a reason they tried Socrates.²⁰

In Asia Minor and much of the eastern part of the Roman Empire, there were new and different gods and cults constantly being introduced through travel and settlement of people from other areas.²¹ Despite the novelty, there were similarities in patterns of worship between all pagan cults. These included animal sacrifice, burning of offerings, dedication of stone monuments, the sharing of food and drink.²² Where distinct religious groups not defined by city or family did exist in the traditional pagan context, they were small and elitist, based around priesthoods, and people did not join them through religious commitment.²³ Rather in a city environment it was to the gods of the city that people were loyal. They did not have a choice in which cult they would join.²⁴ In the ancient Graeco-Roman context religion and city were mutually sustaining.

¹⁸ North, "Disguising Change," 68.

¹⁹ North, "Disguising Change," 69. Cicero *de legibus* 2.19: Separatim nemo habessit deos, neve novos advenas, nisi publice adscitos; privatim colunto quos rite a patribus <cultos acceperint> - *separately from the community, let no one worship new gods, nor foreign ones unless they have been officially adopted. Privately, let them worship those (gods) that <they know to have been worshipped> duly by their forefathers.* (translation John North, "Disguising Change, 69.)

²⁰ Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.1.1: ἀδικεῖ Σωκράτης οὐς μὲν ἡ πόλις νομίζει θεοὺς οὐ νομίζων ἕτερα δὲ καινὰ δαιμόνια εἰσφέρων – *Socrates is accused of not believing in the gods the city believes and of bringing in other and new daimones.* Whilst Greek and Roman culture was different, embedded traditional religion was common to them both.

²¹ Examples such as cults of Isis, Osiris and Serapis from Egypt, Ahura Mazda from the east, Roman gods such as Vesta and Mithras, provide evidence of the movement of people bringing their gods with them as they travelled. See Chapter Eight on assimilation of gods.

²² Mitchell, *Anatolia* 2, 30.

²³ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 177.

²⁴ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 177.

In the country, religious grouping was centred around the rural temple and the god or gods of that temple rather than the gods of any nearby cities or larger towns.²⁵ The gods of rural temples remote from cities were primarily indigenous gods. New Hellenistic gods assimilated the indigenous identities, giving them a Hellenistic identity. Choice in the country was nonetheless equally limited.

The concept of religious belief as understood today was not the experience of ancient pagans.²⁶ To these people, believing in a god as a choice in religion was new thinking. Birth and environmental context, not choice and voluntary commitment, determined religious attachment to any group.²⁷ Belief was not a conscious act because there existed no alternative. Religion without the element of belief, choice, commitment, was the face of traditional paganism.

5.2 Religious change in the cultural environment

The face of traditional paganism changed in the first three imperial centuries. These changes reflect a new religious attitude. They prepared the way for reorientation in pagan cultic practice toward one god in a new setting. The processes of religious change in the cultural environment began with the opportunities for choice in religious groups. This represented a change from the past, from the state of embedded, static religion. New groups which people could choose to become a member of came about because the cultural environment was receptive to change. The assimilation between cultural groups provided spaces for conversation and exchange of ideas. In religion, exchange created an impetus for the development of new groups to

²⁵ See Riehl, "Society and Economy" on the prominence of the rural temple in the life of indigenous groups.

²⁶ The Oxford Online Dictionary defines belief as: "acceptance of something as true even without proof." Modern belief accepts there are choices in religion and this leads to a person making a choice and having commitment to that choice.

²⁷ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 178.

express new ideas about god and gods, new ways of approach to the divine.

The Roman cultural overlay that came to Asia Minor alongside Roman rule brought with it an attitude of unchanging solidarity with the past. The Romans were the inheritors of the ideology of the *Aeterna Roma*. This ideology was foundational to the success of Republic and Empire. Eternal Rome was embedded within Roman psyche as an attitude that no matter what happened the city of Rome and its central place in the world would never change.

In Asia Minor the Roman mindset encountered the flexibility of Hellenised culture, which already was full of new gods and new cults. The Romans knew some of these gods through the migration of cults and Hellenised Asians to the west, and through direct importation of gods from the eastern Empire. Some of these gods were identified with their own gods, given Roman for Greek names.²⁸ Dionysos became Bacchus, Kybele became Magna Mater, Helios became Sol Invictus.

The rise of religious change in both public and private life in Asia Minor was made possible by the flexibility of Hellenistic culture and its assimilating edges with different cultural groups. This shows us that changelessness was indeed an ideology, like the *Aeterna Roma*, and not a fact.

Change was not new to people influenced by Roman cultural environments however. This included change in religious life.²⁹ The second century BCE repression of cults of Dionysos/Bacchus by the Roman Senate seemed to indicate that innovation in religion was unwelcome.³⁰ Yet it was the Romans who introduced the cult of Mithras, which became hugely popular, especially within the military.

²⁸ Stark, "Religious Competition," 7.

²⁹ North, "Disguising Change," 59.

³⁰ Livy 39.8-19.

By an act of the Senate the Asian Kybele was brought to Rome.³¹ Similarly the Romans permitted the dissemination of the Sibylline oracles. These Greek documents named new gods for people to follow.³²

North in fact suggests that Romans did introduce change in religion, but disguised that change to make it seem that the traditions of paganism were steady and unwavering.³³ It was important that any change was perceived to be dependent on Roman authority. Any sense of revolutionary activity was to be avoided. The issue with the festive Bacchanalia in 186 BCE was its independence and perceived uncontrollability. The fact of the persecution of the Bacchic members means there was choice in religion to be made other than traditional paganism.³⁴ A pattern of persecution of groups other than the state sanctioned paganism can be followed in the history of the Jews under the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity.³⁵

North's study on the disguising of religious change focusses on Rome, which limits its usefulness in the context of Asia Minor. The cultural differences between Asia Minor and the western Empire included the different values Romans placed on material things than Greeks.³⁶ Buildings and institutions based around buildings, and the moral value associated with these, contributed to distinctive Roman culture.³⁷ For Hellenistic Greeks, the perceptions of foundational values that differed from the Romans, such as mythology and common language, more closely aligned with their culture.³⁸ These differing values meant that Roman authority did not adversely affect the Hellenistic cultural mainstream of Asia. Within Hellenisation,

³¹ Stark, "Religious Competition," 8.

³² North, "Disguising Change," 65.

³³ North, "Disguising Change," 60-64.

³⁴ North, "Religious Toleration," 97.

³⁵ Persecution continued until at least World War 2.

³⁶ See Chapter Four section 4.7 on the impact of Romanisation on urban Hellenistic cultural groups.

³⁷ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 120.

³⁸ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 130.

innovation in religion happened through the assimilation of different cultural groups. Asia Minor was at the face of cultural exchange with eastern groups and their deities. The need for disguise was less apparent in the east than the west, due to the differing bases of cultural values as discussed.

The diverse cultural milieu of Asia Minor became increasingly complex in religious life in the period before Christianity became dominant.³⁹ The full expansion of the Roman Empire in the second century CE brought with it good roads for travel, security of borders, a more general prosperity. Mixing of different groups of people happened more readily. Complexity increased as new opportunities in religion arose. Movement happened from a static, embedded religion based around gods of the city or a rural temple, to a place where new groups appeared which offered choice in membership and voluntary commitment. The changes that took place in the first three imperial centuries were such that Mitchell and van Nuffelen describe them as a “religious revolution.”⁴⁰

The development of cults which required choice in membership shifted religious power away from family and state, which was something entirely new.⁴¹ This led to competition with the place of traditional temples,⁴² conflict within family hierarchy and between new groups with voluntary membership. The new groups interacted and competed for membership. Religion became a market with the groups being the suppliers, and the needs of people seeking new religious opportunities, the demand.⁴³ This was a new situation. The result of conflict and competition forced members within the religious groups, including traditional paganism, to change to meet the new situation. Within this

³⁹ North, “Development of Religious Pluralism,” 176.

⁴⁰ Mitchell and van Nuffelen, *One God*, 1.

⁴¹ North, “Development of Religious Pluralism,” 187.

⁴² Stark, “Religious Competition,” 9.

⁴³ Stark, “Religious Competition,” 4.

new situation, the groups interacted and coexisted, shaping the religious aspect of the cultural environment. The transformation that resulted spread to all areas of religious life.⁴⁴

Identifying cultural change that happened throughout the Roman Empire from the late Republic until the beginning of the fourth century when the monopolisation of Christianity was quite advanced is critical to this study. Through assimilation between groups the processes of change leading to monotheistic types of religion in Asia Minor arose. Monotheistic groups such as Christianity and some pagan cults of a highest god, Theos Hypsistos, numbered among groups of the new type. Such groups provided voluntary choice in joining and required commitment in response. These groups represented a new way of approach to a highest god. Their development in Asia Minor contributed to a new and unique religious environment in the Roman Empire.

5.3 Religious groups of the new type

The relative stability, security and prosperity of the Asian provinces in the first and second centuries CE assisted the reception of new groups in the religious situation. Stability in the empire declined in the third century, but the environment for religious change was still supported up to and into the fourth century.

‘New’ pagan gods that attracted cult followings in the eastern and western Roman Empire included Isis, Osiris and Serapis from Egypt, Mithras from Rome. In the cities of Asia Minor, previously rural only gods such as Kybele and Attis became popular. These gods and their cults, in addition to some others, especially those with mysteries, such as cults of Dionysos, represented a new religious approach. Pagan cults

⁴⁴ North, “Development of Religious Pluralism,” 192.

of Theos Hypsistos emerged at the same time. Beyond paganism, Christianity and Judaism belonged to this new style of religious group. Groups of the new type differed from the other in ways of understanding the god, in rituals of worship, and in associated activities.

They formed part of the marketplace of religion. The market was competitive, especially when maintenance of temples and permanent personnel was unsupported by the state.⁴⁵ New cults responded to spiritual needs in people which were unfulfilled by the offerings of traditional paganism.⁴⁶ Traditional paganism was limited in its capacity to bring personal satisfaction to people. It served civic and political functions.⁴⁷ Human engagement with traditional paganism was a formal relationship between people, the city, and the god or gods who protected the city and were honoured as patrons. The relationship formed part of the integration aspect of assimilation. It lacked the personal, spiritual aspects of religion which were fulfilled in the new types of cults.

The emotional element of religion was absent in traditional civic, family based religion. As noted above, Stark even goes as far as naming the absence of love in traditional pagan religion.⁴⁸ Pagans did not love the gods of tradition, even though they relied on them for protection. Neither did they expect to be loved in return, unlike their relationships with Isis or Christ.⁴⁹ The worship of these deities permitted the expression of emotion, as attested in literature and scripture.⁵⁰ Stark makes a bold claim in saying that pagans were

⁴⁵ Stark, "Religious Competition," 4.

⁴⁶ Stark, "Religious Competition," 4.

⁴⁷ As North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 177 ff., explains in his discussion on traditional civic pagan religion.

⁴⁸ Stark, "Religious Competition," 9.

⁴⁹ Stark, "Religious Competition," 9-11.

⁵⁰ For example, the deep feelings expressed by Lucius in his process of initiation into the cult of Isis can be found in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* 11. In a different genre, the

missing love in the traditional religious experience. It is also difficult to show through evidence. Would people have sought love in their new religious groups and newly developed relationships with the gods? Love is a qualitative aspect of religion. Is the expectation of love a supposition imposed from our anachronistic view of religion and what we might expect from religion today?

Clearly something essential was absent from traditional religion. Whether the absence was love, other emotion, spiritual desires, or the new drive of individuals away from the parameters of state and family, the appearance of new religious groups, once begun, only became more obvious.

Cults that had or developed mysteries provided opportunities for emotional expression. These too belonged to the new type of religious group. It was to the activities of the mysteries of Dionysos/Bacchus that the Roman Senate reacted in Rome. Emotional responses such as ecstasy and even *mania*, religious furor, accompanied some elements of celebration of the mysteries of gods like Dionysos, Kybele and Isis.⁵¹ The fearful reaction of Roman authorities to the festive Bacchanalia, indicate that something new in religion was happening among religious groups.

Developments in the complexity of mystery cults is a further indication of the movement in religious change.⁵² Mystery cults had been part of

teaching and following of Jesus Christ witnessed in the New Testament is focussed on love.

⁵¹ Worship of Dionysos in the mysteries of the cult were especially associated with *mania*. Euripides' *Backhai* reports of women *mainads*, the followers of Dionysos, driven mad with the ecstasy of worship. It was possible that the conservative Roman Senate were filled with these dramatic theatrical images when they suppressed the cult in Italy.

⁵² The study of mystery cults is large and I will limit my discussion of them here. For excellent overview studies in mystery cults see: Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1987); Martin P. Nilsson, *The Dionysiac Mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman Age*, (New York: Arno Press, 1975); Richard Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery Religions: Their Basic Ideas and Significance*, (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: The Pickwick Press, 1978).

the traditional make up of paganism for centuries. Specific developments in mystery cults occurred however which identified them as a new type of religious group. North does note that it is difficult to know exactly in what ways they did change.⁵³ He suggests that evidence of a doctrine of soteriology of the present life and the next life may qualify a mystery cult as belonging to a religious group of the new type.⁵⁴ He also concedes that mystery cults do not categorise easily, making a common benchmark for identifying them as a new group impossible. Mystery cults had strict rules around membership and different ritual practices and mythical doctrines than the public versions of the cult.⁵⁵ This differentiated them from traditional paganism.

A new type of religion offered choice in membership and expected commitment from members in return. Membership into some groups, especially mystery cults, required initiation. Initiation into mystery cults was a step toward commitment and away from civic religion.⁵⁶ The commitment of initiation led to a more exclusive devotion toward the god of the cult into which one was initiated.⁵⁷ Stark even suggests that in the new type of religious group there is evidence of a monotheistic-like attitude toward the one god of cult allegiance, and of these groups that, "Although not as exclusive as Judaism and Christianity, Bacchanalianism, Mithra, Isiacism, and Cybelene worship expected initiates to cease temple-hopping and devote themselves fully to their respective deity."⁵⁸

⁵³ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 183.

⁵⁴ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 183.

⁵⁵ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 189-90. Mystery cults of Mithras developed a sophisticated version of the afterlife involving levels of initiation which provided opportunities for the progress of the soul, and basic doctrines which were subversive of ordinary expectations of ancient life.

⁵⁶ North, "Religious Toleration," 98.

⁵⁷ Stark, "Religious Competition," 12.

⁵⁸ Stark, "Religious Competition," 13.

If this is the case, then it is possible to say that the new religious situation created opportunities for monotheistic expressions of god to arise. In addition to initiation as a means of membership and commitment, a new type of relationship with the god evolved. The new connection through worship permitted an emotional response that did not appear to be part of traditional, civic religion.

The new types of religious groups included those which specified a quality of doctrine, experiences, insights, myths and stories.⁵⁹ New types of religious groups differed from the traditional religion which existed very much as part of the fabric of a city.⁶⁰ The image of traditional religion was represented in the protection and patronage of a deity and the desire to maintain good relationships with the gods, to follow appropriate rules of behaviour around significant human events such as birth and death.⁶¹ Civic statues which adorned cities expressed this image. The new type of religions offered a lifestyle based around membership that whilst engaging with civic life at integrational, or structural assimilation levels, also enjoyed an independent identity. The disassociation of identity from the civic and from family structures led to conflict.⁶²

New religious groups shifted power away from state and family. Conflict resulted from the breaking down of the patriarchal powerhouse that dominated the structuring of authoritative hierarchy in society. This same structuring was modelled in families. The figure of *paterfamilias*, the male headship of family, was a version of imperial headship over Rome and all the provinces.⁶³ The structure of family around this model was a cause of conflict as new allegiance to groups with different values drew authority away from the traditional

⁵⁹ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 178.

⁶⁰ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 177.

⁶¹ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 188.

⁶² North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 187.

⁶³ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 185. The *paterfamilias* was the oldest living male *progenitor* within a family.

figurehead. Previously, pagans participated in religious activities within the family and as part of the city.⁶⁴

New cults differed from traditional paganism in having written documents expressing doctrine, beliefs, moral guidance, explanation of rituals.⁶⁵ They also offered the benefit of community. From within community a wider range of activities beyond worship took place. New groups had their own organisational or authority structure which was independent of the traditions of family and city. Commitment to groups included loyalty and rejection of past types of behaviour. Separate values and principles which would not be accepted by members of wider society defined new groups. New groups developed distinction from the normal religious life of city, with new rituals, different calendars, dietary rules.⁶⁶

Christianity was an obvious new type of religious group which emerged from the first century CE. It cannot be assumed to have instigated the new situation however, because some changes happened before the Christian movement held any numerical significance.⁶⁷ Christianity was a missional religion. This attitude acted as an impeller to other new groups, making them react to a new situation and thereby be creative and adaptive.⁶⁸ The presence and extent of influence of Christian groups in the Hellenistic cultural matrix should not be overestimated however. Scholars such as Schnabel appear to emphasise the presence and success of Christian groups over indigenous pagan groups in the cultural environment.⁶⁹ Literary

⁶⁴ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 186.

⁶⁵ Stark, "Religious Competition," 11.

⁶⁶ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 184.

⁶⁷ The Roman reaction against participants in the Bacchanalia preceded any Christian presence by nearly two centuries.

⁶⁸ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 191-2.

⁶⁹ Schnabel, "Divine Tyranny," 182-7. Here Schnabel explains in five points why the rise and success of Christianity led to the decline of the practice of public confession in indigenous cults of especially Phrygia and Lydia. In my mind, he overemphasises the role of Christianity in shaping the cultural environment, at least before the fourth century.

evidence derived from Christian authors in the first to the third centuries give little indication of numbers of Christians or their impact on the mainstream cultural environment. In many places, inscriptional evidence was similarly quite limited.⁷⁰ Even in places like Sardis, Thyateira and Philadelphia which are addressed in the Book of Revelation,⁷¹ inscriptional evidence is very poor.⁷² Phrygia, Lykaonia and northern Isauria on the other hand, provide less literary evidence⁷³ but much more inscriptions.⁷⁴

Christianity was a distinct group, even when some Christians still shared in the practices of their inherited ethnic Judaism, or with previous pagan practices. Unlike Judaism however, membership of Christian *ekklesiai* was not ethnically based. Christian groups were made up of people from various backgrounds, as the witness of the New Testament shows. People became members of Christian groups by voluntary choice and initiation, and there was an expected level of commitment by members to the community. Distinct funerary formulae and distribution patterns assist in archaeologically identifying Christian groups.⁷⁵ The patterns of assimilation as discussed throughout this study suggest that Christians, as much as

⁷⁰ Mitchell, *Anatolia* 2, 37.

⁷¹ Rev. 1.11; 2.18; 3.1, 7.

⁷² Mitchell, *Anatolia* 2, 38.

⁷³ Noting the important source of Pliny *Letter to Trajan*.

⁷⁴ TAMV I.21, a Christian epitaph from Lydia: Ὀνησιμῆς | ἰδίᾳ θυγα- | τρὶ Ἀμμίᾳ | μνήμῃς | χάριν. | <ε>ἴ τις δὲ ἀμαρτήσῃ εἰς τὴν ἰκόνα [ταύ]- | τὴν, ἔσται ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ ἀν[αθέ]- | μας τ[οῦ] | ζῶν[τος] | θσο[ῦ] {θεοῦ} – *Onesimēs to her own daughter Ammia the favour of a memorial. If anyone will sin against this image (statue) his life will be the anathema of the living god.* The characteristic Christian formula is ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ ἀν[αθέ]- | μας τ[οῦ] | ζῶν[τος] | θσο[ῦ], *his life will be the anathema of the living god.* Mitchell, *Anatolia* 2, 59. From Phrygia the earliest Christian inscriptions are dated to the middle and late second century. See W. M. Calder, *AS* 5 (1955): 33-5 no. 2. Cited in Mitchell, *Anatolia* 2, 38.

⁷⁵ Mitchell, *Anatolia* 2, 39. In Eumeneia the formula ἔσται αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸν θεόν – *that one will reckon with god* may sometimes be a Christian funerary formula, although its Jewish and occasional pagan use must be taken into consideration. See study in Trebilco, “The Christian and Jewish Eumeneian Formula,” especially 72-9. Inscriptions with this formula which can be identified more clearly as Christian, such as those depicting the Christogram, (eg., *MAMA* VI 234) are mostly from the third century however. In the earlier period evidence for Christian presence is less conspicuous.

other minority groups, engaged with the Hellenistic cultural mainstream.

Christians were not concerned about common descent as an identifying factor, unlike Hellenised pagans. Hellenistic pagans valued a past rooted in common mythology.⁷⁶ Christians were more like Romans in this respect. Roman identity had an historical origin based on the founding of the city of Rome.⁷⁷ For Christians the historical origin of their founding was based in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Membership did not require common descent.

Jewish groups were present in the cultural matrix. They represented a type of new religious group, even though they were not new. Jews had a body of inherited traditions which defined them as an ethnic minority group within the cultural environment. These traditions were strictly linked to religion and not connected to the city. Conflict that arose periodically with the Romans was for the most part not focussed on ethnic distinction.⁷⁸ Jewish ethnicity was based around inherited cultural traditions. Jews could thus justify religious difference from the mainstream through inherited tradition. This was tolerated for the most part. It was inherited tradition that earned Jews a level of respect from Roman authorities. If Jewish or any other groups began to be viewed as a religious group, the dynamics of interaction changed and the potential for conflict against Roman authority increased.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 129. See also Mitchell, "Ethnicity, Acculturation and Empire," 127 on the importance of establishing foundation myths and stories in new Hellenistic cities which located the cities within the wider Hellenistic cultural world.

⁷⁷ Woolf, "Becoming Roman, Staying Greek," 130. He says this despite the mythology surrounding the founding of the city, which Woolf does not discuss. The figure of the Capitoline wolf who nursed the brothers Romulus and Remus was a mythological icon around which the story of the founding of the city grew. Nonetheless I agree with Woolf that it was the historical event which defined being Roman rather than the mythology itself.

⁷⁸ The Jewish-Roman wars in 66-73 CE and 132-6 CE were concerned to restore the Jewish state. They were a result of Jewish resistance to Roman authority rather than a Roman directive against an ethnic minority group.

⁷⁹ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 191.

Jews are not well known for missionary activities in the first to third centuries CE.⁸⁰ Even in the context of religious competition they did not actively become missionary. The monotheistic basis of Jewish religion appeared to be attractive in the new religious environment however. People did become converts to Judaism and the influences of Judaism on the growing monotheistic culture of Asia Minor was significant.⁸¹

The presence of new religious cults in the cultural environment of Asia Minor accompanied the movement into a new religious situation. New cults created a religious marketplace in which competition for membership took place. New cults became sources of competition. They offered a different religious way than traditional pagan religion which was static, embedded, part of the very structure of city, state and family. Competition caused conflict. New groups offered to fill what was spiritually, personally and emotionally absent from traditional religion. New doctrine, rituals, activities, arose in this environment of change. New groups responded to the presence of the other by cultural change and assimilation.

5.4 The individual as contributor to cultural change

The rise in influence of the individual in the process of cultural change leading to a new religious situation is witnessed in the first three imperial centuries.⁸² As with the development of new religious groups,

⁸⁰ For a discussion otherwise, see Louis H. Feldman, "Was Judaism a Missionary Religion in Ancient Times?" in Menachem Mor (ed.), *Jewish Assimilation, Acculturation and Accommodation: Past Traditions, Current Issues and Future Prospects*, Vol. 2 Studies in Jewish Civilization, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992), 24-37. For a more recent discussion, see Judith Lieu, "From Us but not of Us? Moving the Boundaries of Community," in *Early Christian Communities between Ideal and Reality*, ed. Mark Grundeken and Joseph Verheyden, WUNT 342 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015): 161-75.

⁸¹ See Chapter Seven on the highest god between Jews and pagans.

⁸² For a collection of diverse essays on the individual aspect of culture, see the volume edited by Rüpke, *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean*.

the rise in influence of the individual coincides with political, military and economic stability in the era of Roman imperial expansion. Stability continued until the first part of the third century when the frontiers of the western empire began to collapse.⁸³ From evidence Josephus provides for the improved conditions for Jews in Asia after the establishment of the *pax romana*⁸⁴ it can be reasonably presumed that most inhabitants of the new empire benefitted from the stable conditions. Asia Minor was removed from the proximity of Rome itself and the more culturally flexible Hellenisation prevailed as the cultural mainstream.

A stable environment provided opportunity for people to think about things not immediately connected to survival. This included intellectual speculation about god and gods and the relationship between these and human beings. This environment also provided the space for spiritual development and personal religious fulfilment.

Monotheistic elements in religion developed alongside intellectual speculation in Asia Minor, and was accompanied by changes brought about by the presence of new gods, the integration of smaller cults into larger, cult competition, and the growing influence of Jewish monotheism.⁸⁵ These things were a departure from traditional pagan religious views in which a pantheon of gods oversaw the functioning of the universe and the human communities within it.⁸⁶

As people began to perceive the gods and their relationships with them differently, there also arose a sense of vulnerability and anxiety as

⁸³ For a thorough study of the change and transformation throughout the centuries of the Roman Empire see for example, Warwick Ball, *Rome in the East: The Transformation of an Empire*, (Routledge: London & New York, 2000).

⁸⁴ From the beginning of Augustus' principate in 27 BCE to the late second century.

⁸⁵ Mitchell and van Nuffelen, *One God*, 6-7.

⁸⁶ This comment about pagan religion is despite philosophical notions from the fifth century BCE Presocratics onward that describe an ultimate deity as one. More will be said about this in the following chapter on monotheism.

they viewed their place in the world.⁸⁷ This was notable as the second century closed and the third began. As the imperial period progressed and preceding the dominance of Christianity, religious anxiety was visually represented in the well documented epigraphical responses of the imperial period in Asia. Some of these reflected emotional responses such as despair, fear, pains, hope, satisfaction. Belayche suggests that the emotional responses reported in many of the confession texts of Lydia and Phrygia ending with the phrase ἀπὸ νῦν εὐλογῶ, from now on I praise (the deity/ies), attest this anxiety.⁸⁸ I interpret the phrase with the sense that people believed if they praised the god they had offended, no further harm would happen. This perspective does suggest people felt that things would go wrong.

Pagans inherited a collective religious consciousness. This was part of the embedded civic/state orientation of traditional paganism discussed by North.⁸⁹ However, the evidence set out in this chapter suggests that people also approached the divine as individuals.

The concept of identity connects the individual with his or her place in the cultural environment. As North suggests, religious identity is a well discussed and ambiguous term.⁹⁰ In traditional paganism religious identity was embedded with political, social and ethnic identity. It was not until the fourth century CE that evidence of change in self-understanding moved to a point where people could describe themselves particularly as Christian or pagan, or any other designation within society (not necessarily religious). The changes that

⁸⁷ Belayche, "Religious Rhetoric," 245.

⁸⁸ Belayche, "Religious Rhetoric," 246. For example see ἀπὸ νῦν εὐλογῶ in the last lines of *SEG* 35.1158, a confession stele. Another example is found in Petzl, "Beichtinschriften," 29, no. 20 = *SEG* 34.1218.

⁸⁹ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism."

⁹⁰ North, "Disguising Change," 78. North describes two types of religious identity, one type being a connection with social identity and engagement with different religious groups, the second being the development of a sense of the self and the personal as a religious agent. Religious identity underwent change in both types of identity perception.

enabled this to happen in religious terms were related to the quality of an individual's religious experience, which itself came about through significant religious change.⁹¹ Religious change which led to a new quality of experience for the individual was made possible by the presence of competing religious groups which had not previously been present in traditional paganism.

Religious identity shifted from being bound up with the static expressions of traditional paganism to being separated from that state, thus the rise of the individual.

The extent to which the 'real individual' of ancient Asia Minor can be determined through the evidence is limited. Inscriptions of especially the second and third centuries do give a broad scope of the social status of individuals and families, but not all classes of people were represented. Despite the prevalence of epigraphy, most of inscriptions related to people who could afford to have their memory inscribed in stone.⁹² Awareness of the insights and limitations of language usage when assessing the class and status of people extends to discerning the individual in inscriptional evidence.⁹³

North however, claims all classes of people were represented in this era of high inscriptional output, including slaves.⁹⁴ His claim is based in evidence for individual religious vows, gifts and dedications. I am not convinced that all classes of people were represented epigraphically. Slaves especially were in most instances unrepresented in epigraphy and memorial. The exception may be imperial slaves, many of whom had sufficient means to commission inscriptions and possibly buildings. Three dedications to Zeus Megistos from a local

⁹¹ North, "Disguising Change," 79.

⁹² Strelan, "Languages of the Lycus Valley," 80-2 discusses economic ability among people and the leaving of memorials.

⁹³ Class structure is a limitation discussed in using the method of assimilation theory. See Chapter Two. See also Chapter Four section 4.4 on indigenous language.

⁹⁴ North, "Disguising Change," 77.

sanctuary near an imperial estate around Lagina are likely to have come from imperial slaves, or at the least, imperial freedpersons.⁹⁵ Evidence of the *καταγράφαι* from the sanctuary of Apollo Lairbenos also provides some indication that people without the means to support their own children made inscriptions when their children were released from a period of service.⁹⁶

When individual worshippers founded local cult places they sometimes attached their own name to the god's, indicating they were the founders and maintainers of a sanctuary. The epithet Ἄρτεμιδώρου found in inscriptions frequently associated with the toponym Ἄξιotta, Ἄξιottηνός from the cult of Mēn, might indicate that the god's cult in Axiotta went back to foundation by a certain Artemidoros.⁹⁷ Private people expressed their feelings to god by their own formula, such as incorporating their own personal name. They used certain names for gods, either regular epithets or new names.⁹⁸ These things reflected a person's self-image to the community. It is evidence of a new emphasis on an individualised relationship with the gods.

Many inscriptions did reflect the individual concerns of ordinary people, even if they were expressed in a community context.⁹⁹ The corpus of confession texts from Phrygia and Lydia record very ordinary things. They express a practical religiosity rather than the speculation of intellectual elites.¹⁰⁰ Belayche goes as far as saying these texts reflect a trend toward a perception of an individualised relationship

⁹⁵ *MAMA* VII.1.107, 130, 135. See Mitchell, *Anatolia* 2, 23.

⁹⁶ The *καταγράφαι* are according to Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1, 194, people enrolled into the service of the god. Kevin M. Miller, "Apollo Lairbenos," *Numen* 32/1 (1985): 59 prefers the meaning of manumitted children. See below section on the processes of transgression, confession and penance.

⁹⁷ Georg Petzl and Hasan Malay, "A New Confession Inscription from the Katakekaumene," *GRBS* 28 (1987): 462. Sometimes the designation refers to cults which are not located in or near Axiotta, meaning that either the cult was successful and spread beyond its original location, or that the connection between Axiotta and Artemidoros is not certain.

⁹⁸ Belayche, "Religious Rhetoric," 247.

⁹⁹ Belayche, "Religious Rhetoric," 246.

¹⁰⁰ Belayche, "Religious Rhetoric," 260.

with the gods.¹⁰¹ I assess the confessions as indicators of religious change involving individuals below.

In summary, the rise in presence of cults of the new type contributed to the more prominent role of individuals. New cults allowed space for the expression of individual piety. Individuality and religious identity became connected in a new way. Secure and generally more prosperous conditions for cultural groups across the Roman Empire assisted in the development of individual spiritual expressions. At the same time, this was met with a sense of anxiety and concern about human/divine relationships and the place of human beings in the world.

5.5 Summing up cultural change in the environment leading to a new religious situation

I have traced the development of a new religious situation in the cultural environment of Asia Minor so far in this chapter. The new religious situation emerged in the matrix of the cultural environment. The social and economic conditions of the Roman Empire in the first and second centuries CE supported the assimilating interaction between different cultural groups within mainstream Hellenistic culture. This continued through the third century, even with the edges of anxiety stimulating the spiritual and personal concerns of people. The interaction between groups showed up deficiencies in tradition pagan religion to meet spiritual needs.

New religious groups formed around new gods, gods fused by Hellenistic-indigenous interaction, or the extensions of traditional gods through mystery activities. Cults like Christianity and Judaism drew adherents because they provided identity, community, and personal

¹⁰¹ Belayche, "Religious Rhetoric," 252.

meaning for people aside from the traditional structures of family and city.

New religious groups offered choices that were unavailable in the constructions of traditional paganism. They provided the hope of personal spiritual fulfillment. In return, they required commitment of members. The combination of many different religious groups in the cultural environment created a marketplace religious economy.

Competition existed for membership. Interaction resulted in new opportunities for spiritual expression, new ideas about god and gods. The environment of competition caused conflict, both between groups, with the mainstream, and with civic authority and family structures. The new religious situation contributed to breaking down the limitations of traditional family and city based religious groups and opened the way for individuals to be influential. A rise in self-consciousness and desire for religious self-expression accompanied the more prominent role of the individual in the new situation.

The impact of the individual in religious change, and the response of minority group religion may be traced in the phenomenon of public confession in western Asia Minor, to which this chapter now turns.

5.6 Transgression, confession and penance: a response to the new religious situation

Religious change in Asia Minor can be seen in inscriptional evidence recording the transgression, confession and penance of individuals before the gods. These records of religious practice are public documents which provide significant insight into the religious behaviour particularly of individuals. The inscriptions required specificity. This gives them unique insight into the religious attitude of the region. The practice of public confession is evidence of response to

the authority of the local gods of justice and vengeance.¹⁰² Evidence is prominent especially in Phrygia and Lydia and takes the form of what I will generally describe as ‘confession steles’ or ‘confession texts.’ The steles were carved from locally quarried stone.¹⁰³ They were inscribed appropriately to reflect the message individuals wished to convey to the community about their relationship with the god/s.¹⁰⁴ The steles were usually set up within the precinct of the temple of the respective god.¹⁰⁵ This is especially evident in and around the sanctuary of Apollo Lairbenos in Phrygia.

The confession texts belonged to the cultural context of minority indigenous groups. They reflected a local Lydian-Phrygian religious mentality that was distinctive in the environment.¹⁰⁶ Their production reflected a response to a new religious situation and a differently perceived relationship between human being and divinity. Belayche thinks it is possible to describe religious individualisation through the epigraphy of the regions where the confession steles are concentrated.¹⁰⁷ An increasing trend toward individualisation is noted in Roman times, as North establishes throughout his study.¹⁰⁸

The confession steles were a new response to the presence of alternative and competing cults.¹⁰⁹ They are examples of adaptation to

¹⁰² Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1, 191.

¹⁰³ Belayche, “Religious Rhetoric,” 246 n. 16 referring to the quarrying of pavonazetto, a purple veined white marble from Dokimeion, cites T. Drew-Bear, “Nouvelles inscriptions de Dokimeion,” *MEFRA* 106.2, (1994): 747-844, and M. Christol, “Les carrières de Dokimeion à l’époque sévérienne,” *EA* 53 (1991): 113-74.

¹⁰⁴ Belayche, “Religious Rhetoric,” 246 says that expressions of individuality were made in a community context.

¹⁰⁵ Petzl and Maly, “New Confession Inscription,” 472.

¹⁰⁶ Kraabel, “Υψιστος,” 83.

¹⁰⁷ Belayche, “Religious Rhetoric,” 246.

¹⁰⁸ North, “Disguising Change.”

¹⁰⁹ But see Riel, “A Forgotten Confession-Inscription,” 36 n. 16, who suggests the practice is descended from ancient Anatolian Hittites. Riel claims there are connections between Hittite cult and rituals related to public confession that can be traced in unbroken continuity from the second into the first millennium BCE. She also admits that it takes 1000 years for evidence of the texts to appear in Greek, but does not think this fact compromises the theory of continuity. She suggests the confession practices were performed orally in the epichoric languages of Karia, Lydia

the new religious situation that emerged in this environment and they represent the tenacity and adaptability of indigenous religion in the face of change. Adaptation to change is the impetus to assimilation. In the context of public confession, resistance to Hellenisation and Romanisation is notable through deference to the power and authority of local gods and the rural temple rather than to the gods of the cities or to the imperial cult.

The production of confession steles is mostly confined to the early second to the late third centuries CE.¹¹⁰ During the early part of these years the habit of inscribing on stone was at its height. The reason the “epigraphic habit”¹¹¹ took hold in Asia Minor may be related to the ease of access to stones¹¹² or to comparative economic prosperity, stable political and military security of conditions,¹¹³ or a combination of these. Schnabel does not think the epigraphic habit solely contributed to the appearance of the steles. Supporting this he refers to the localised concentration of the steles in Lydia and Phrygia.¹¹⁴

and Phrygia before they were inscribed in stone. She also says that the confession practice was not Greek in character, that in Greek religion there was no institutional framework for the confession of sins. This to me indicates the viability of connection of the practice with Jewish presence in the area. It also affirms that a new religious situation was arising in Hellenised Asia Minor.

¹¹⁰ Schnabel, “Divine Tyranny,” 181 notes the earliest confession inscription. This text is from 81-2 CE from Goldë in the area to the north of Kavlaki in north east Lydia. *TAMV* I.501: ἔτους ρξς, μη(νὸς) Ἄρτεμει | σίου κ'. Ναῖς ὑπὸ Μητρὸς | Τασζηνῆς κολασθεῖσα | ὑπὲρ τῆς ἰδίας σωτηρίας | καὶ τῶν τέκνων ἀνέ(σ)θηκεν {ἀνέθηκεν} – *in the year ρξς in the month of Artemis κ. Nais having been punished by Mother Taszene set (this stele) up for the sake of the salvation of herself and her children.* Petzl and Malay, “New Confession Inscription,” 459, place the range of dated confession documents from *TAMV*.I 317 (114-15 CE) to L. Robert, *BCH* 107 (1983): 516 = *SEG* XXXIII 1013 (263-4 CE), but do not know the first century inscription from Goldë.

¹¹¹ Ramsay MacMullen, “The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire,” in *The American Journal of Philology*, 103/3 (1982): 233-46.

¹¹² See Belayche, “Religious Rhetoric,” note 101 above.

¹¹³ MacMullen, “Epigraphic Habit,” 237 refers to the prevalence of private inscriptions in the generally prosperous time of the Antonine emperors, 138-92 CE.

¹¹⁴ But see Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1, 194 who implies that despite archaeological evidence of the confession texts being localised in mostly Phrygia and Lydia, that evidence of similarity in another type of inscription, the votive inscription, between Phrygia, Lydia and the rest of Asia Minor indicates that the relationship of people toward the gods was common across Asia Minor.

Whilst MacMullen proposes that the epigraphic habit was confined to within the boundaries of the literate populace,¹¹⁵ I suggest that the meaning of ‘literacy’ is open to broad interpretation in the ancient context of Asia Minor. It did not only mean the ability of a person to read and write, as Strelan’s study highlights.¹¹⁶ Given this, the scope of meaning of ‘literacy’ cannot be assumed as universal between scholars.

The confession steles cover the concerns of a great many ‘ordinary’ people. The most basic of these inscriptions reflect realistically the everyday nature of living in their cultural context rather than the more idealistic representations that may come about through a more artfully designed piece of writing.¹¹⁷ As Mitchell has said: “The case histories which are documented in the confessions provide vivid glances at the social and economic conditions of village life.”¹¹⁸

At the same time epigraphy was at its height Christianity was gaining momentum as a new religious group. Schnabel suggests the confession inscriptions were a response to the expansion of Christianity and they reflect the efforts of local gods (through local sanctuaries and priesthoods) reasserting power over the people.¹¹⁹ If this was the case, it implies that the local religions felt threatened by the expansion of

¹¹⁵ MacMullen, “Epigraphic Habit,” 233.

¹¹⁶ Strelan, “Languages of the Lycus Valley,” 82: “The issue of the literacy and illiteracy levels of stone-cutters is very complex...” An example of a text which displays this complexity comes from the sanctuary of Apollo Lairbenos. I have chosen not to attempt translation. Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” 132 no. 112 = *MAMA* IV.285: [.....] λίου Ἀπολλ- | [ωνί]ου δι τὸ ἡμαρτηκ- | ἐνε, ἐπεὶ τῷ χωρὶ πισέ- | τυχει καὶ διῆθα τὴν | κόμη β’ ἄγαγνα· λημόν- | ησα· ἔλησμόνησα ἢ παρήμη {παρήμην} εἰς τὴν κόμη | παραγέλω μηδεὶς καταφ- | ρεινήσει τῷ θεῶν, ἐπεὶ ἔξ- | ει τὴν σείλην ἔξοπράρειο[ν]. | Ἐπόισ’ ἐτόνμετον {αὐτόματον} ἢ προγεμένε {προκειμένη} | [Εὐτ]υχεὶς καὶ ἔξομολογήσα- | [το] καὶ εἰλάθη.

¹¹⁷ That is not to say that some confession inscriptions were not written in a very good style. The elaborate text provided at the end of this section, the ‘Syntyche inscription’ is an example.

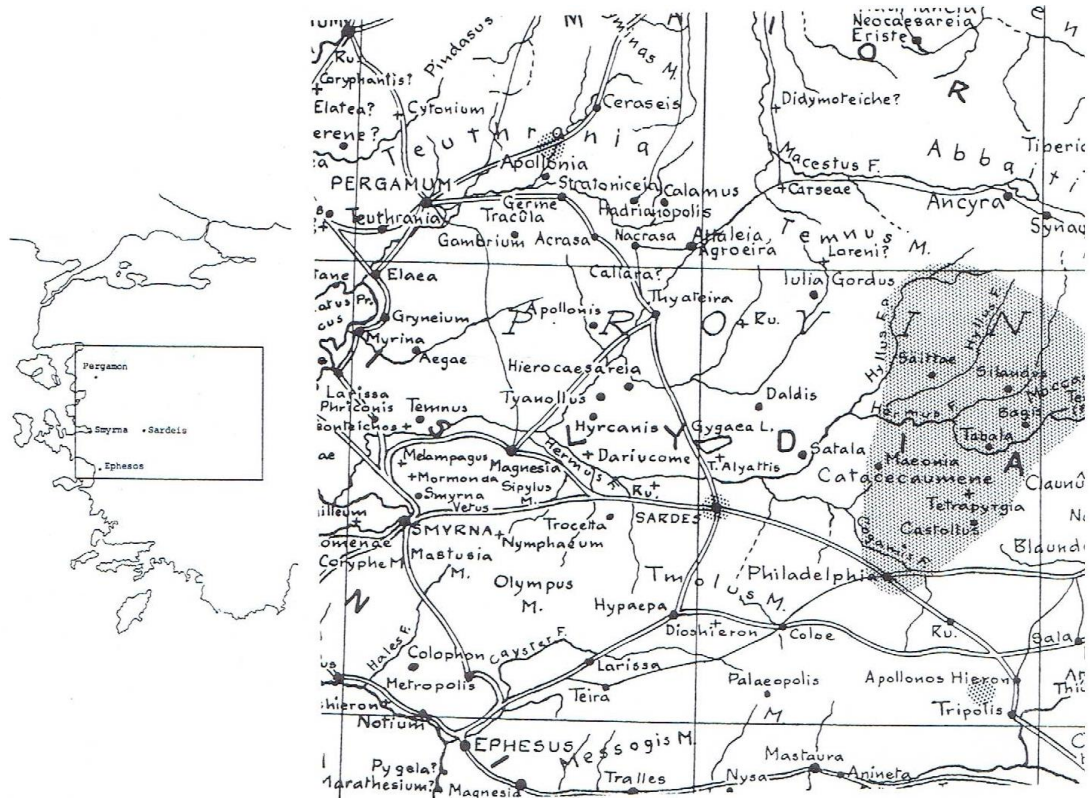
¹¹⁸ Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1, 191 ff.

¹¹⁹ Schnabel, “Divine Tyranny,” 162.

Christianity and adapted to the situation to maintain distinction. It also suggests that Christianity was present in rural areas.

Public confession in the context of local rural cults was a response to the new religious situation, to the new role of individuals, and to perceived competition between groups. In this process, the local religions changed character, creating the new rituals of inscribing confession. The minority indigenous groups which took up the practice of public confession may be described as cults which developed into those of the new religious type.¹²⁰ The adaptability of rural cults to the new religious situation is more remarkable because rural religion was traditionally conservative. Their assimilative capacity for survival against the trends of Hellenisation and Romanisation and creating an entirely new and unique religious practice is evidence of the positive effect of assimilation on a minority cultural group.

¹²⁰ Even if previously they appeared as traditional pagan cults.



Map 2: Enlarged portion of confession text area highlighting the Katakekaumene. From *A Classical Map of Asia Minor* by W. M. Calder and George E. Bean, (London: British Institute of Archaeology in Ankara, 1958), in Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” iii.

The central part of the region identified in Map 2, the Katakekaumene, is particularly notable for confession texts. Examples also come from Sardis, Kastoloupedion, Lydian Philadelphia, Bulladan and southeast Mysia. There is another significant group from the sanctuary of Apollo Lairbenos in the upper course of the Maeander river in Phrygia near Hierapolis.¹²² Elsewhere in Phrygia are examples from Tiberiopolis,

¹²¹ Ricl, “A Forgotten Confession-Inschriftion,” 36. At the time of writing (1997) 85 texts were known from the area. See also Schnabel, “Divine Tyranny,” 160. Most recently (2013) Belayche, “Religious Rhetoric,” 252, notes 150 confession texts. These include those from beyond Maionia, in the wider regions of Lydia and Phrygia as well.

¹²² Ricl, “A Forgotten Confession-Inschriftion,” 36. At the time of writing (1997) 20 texts were known from the sanctuary of Apollo Lairbenos. These texts may be found in Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” nos. 106-124; M. Ricl, “La conscience du peché dans les cultes anatoliens à l’ époque romaine. La confession des fautes rituelles et éthiques dans les cultes méoniens et phrygiens,” (Belgrade, 1995): nos. 109-128. See also *MAMA* IV 279-90. Schnabel, “Divine Tyranny,” 160 also refers to these texts.

Eumeneia, Akmonia, Afyon. Further examples of confession are also found in Karia, Cappadocia, Bithynia. From this amount of evidence Riehl says it is reasonable to suggest that similar practices of belief and ritual were shared throughout the indigenous peoples of Anatolia.¹²³

If the beliefs and rituals of indigenous people concerning transgression, confession and penance were common, as Riehl suggests, then it follows that the gods of justice and vengeance, who were the object of honour in the confessions texts, had a distinct function in the process. Their role in public confession was not the same as the Hellenised gods and imported gods more commonly found in urban centres. This suggests that people living in the country thought these gods were superior in hierarchy because of the powerful role they played in administering justice.

The prevalence of evidence of public confession affirms the importance of local sanctuaries in the religious context of Asia Minor. The once local cults of Apollo at Klaros and Didyma reflect the success of rural sanctuaries¹²⁴ to the extent that these became the dominant centres of oracle consultation in not only Asia Minor but the whole Graeco-Roman world.¹²⁵

With this context in mind, I now examine the processes of confession and penance. This will clarify the practices which produced such ubiquitous evidence, and set up for discussion on linking these practices as examples of a growing trend toward pagan monotheism.

¹²³ Riehl, "A Forgotten Confession-Inscription," 36.

¹²⁴ Parke, *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor*, 112 names Klaros and Didyma as originally rural sanctuaries.

¹²⁵ Following the decline of Delphi as a significant centre of oracle production. See discussion on oracle centres in Asia Minor in Chapter Eight.

5.6.1 The processes involved in public confession

Confession inscriptions were usually composed after the events of illness, suffering or death. The onset of these things was considered to be divine punishment¹²⁶ for some transgression, whether intended or otherwise.¹²⁷ A person found out about the offence via a dream¹²⁸ or other means of conveyance, such as through an oracle¹²⁹ or *angelos*.¹³⁰ The person who had thus suffered punishment by the god for a perceived transgression then confessed with the hope of propitiating the offended god.¹³¹ Evidence of the confession texts from in and around the sanctuary of Apollo Lairbenos near Hierapolis suggests that even if people hoped for release from a particular ailment, the lack of thanks for deliverance to the god expressed in the inscriptions

¹²⁶ Frequently the word κολάζω, to punish, check, correct, chastise, is found in confession inscriptions to indicate recognition by the penitent that the god has acted to their misfortune.

¹²⁷ Unintentional transgression was nonetheless believed to be a personal affront to a god: *SEG* 33.1013.2-8 from Saïttai in Lydia 262/3 CE - Ἀθήναιος κολασ | θεὸς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὲρ | ἀμαρτείας κατὰ ἄγνοι | αν, ὑπὸ ὄνειρου πολλὰς | κολάσεις λαβῶν ἀπιτή | θην στήλῃν καὶ ἀνέγρα | ψα τὰς δυνάμεις τοῦ θεοῦ - *Athenaios having been punished by the god for the sake of sins (done) according to ignorance, receiving many punishments, a stele was demanded through a dream and I engraved the power of the god.*

¹²⁸ See above note: ὑπὸ ὄνειρου - *through a dream.*

¹²⁹ Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” 115-16 no. 98 = *SEG* 29.1155: [-].O.[-]Φ[....]- | ηνοῦ κολασθ- | εἰς, διὰ τὸ με ἔτ- | οἰμον εἶνε κὲ κ- | εκληδονίσθε | με ὅτι “Μεμολυ- | μένος εἶ,” εὐξάμε- | νος, ἀνέθηκα - (*top line has too many characters missing to attempt translation*) *having been punished, he (the god) immediately sent by me to receive an omen, “you have been disgracing yourself,” praying I set (this stele) up.*

The word κληδονίζομαι means to receive an omen, thus communication via an oracle.

¹³⁰ Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” 3-5 no. 3 = *TAMV* 1.159 from 164-5 CE in the territory of Silandros (lines 8-11): ὁ θεὸς οὖν ἐκέλευ- | σε δι’ ἀγγέλου πραθῆναι τὸ εἶμά- | τιν καὶ στηλλογραφήσαι τὰς δυ- | νάμεις - *Therefore the god commanded through an angelos the garment to be made known and to inscribe on a stele the powers (of the god);* 47-8 no. 38 (lines 6-8): ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀν- | γέλου τοῦ Μηνὸς Πε- | τραεῖτου Ἀξετηνοῦ - *by the angelos of Mēn Petraeitōs Axiotenos.* See also Belayche, “Religious Rhetoric,” 252-3. Conveyance via *angeloi* will be studied in more depth in Chapter Seven.

¹³¹ The language of ἀμαρτία, failure, fault, sin; fault of judgement is found in confession texts. Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” nos. 5, 11, 23, 24, 40, 95. Caution should be used in too closely equating this with the anachronistic presumptions of the meaning of ‘sin’ from later Christian contexts.

indicates that penitents still suffered at the time of offering the confession.¹³²

Confession usually required expiation, which was then followed by the divine order to set up a stele.¹³³ The command to erect a stele was usually the last stage in the process.¹³⁴ Obedience to the divine demand was expressed by the word *στηλογραφέω*, to inscribe, write on a stele.¹³⁵ The presence of many steles suggest that it was the practice of setting up a public monument that was most important in this process, as much as the fact of sacrifice and atonement.¹³⁶ The claim to have propitiated the gods as far down as *διὰ τέκνα τέκνων, ἔγγον ἐγόνων*, through the children of the children, the descendants of the descendants,¹³⁷ indicates that the confession was intended to be public and permanent.¹³⁸ The permanence of the steles as surviving monuments even today well outlasted the culture of people for whom they were relevant.

Expiation included fees and fines paid to the temple, and sometimes sacrifice to satisfy the god and ensure the guilty person would be released from the offence.¹³⁹ In addition to the demand to erect a stele, property, copies of cult statues, annulment of ritual acts or false oaths,

¹³² Miller, "Apollo Lairbenos," 67. Also Schnabel, "Divine Tyranny," 176, that healing was not an anticipated outcome of confession. But see Riel, "A Forgotten Confession-Inscription," 43, who says that in ancient cultures which practiced public confession, sin becomes materialised and is eliminated as a result, along with the illness or affliction.

¹³³ Schnabel, "Divine Tyranny," 161 reduces the structure of confession texts to: transgression – punishment – confession – expiation – divine order to set up a stele. See also Petzl and Malay, "A New Confession Inscription," 459-60.

¹³⁴ Riel, "A Forgotten Confession Inscription," 39.

¹³⁵ Many examples exist of the use of this term in the confession corpus. For example, *SEG* 35.1158 (lines 7-9): *καὶ ἐστηλογράφησεν τὰς δυνά- | μεις τῶν θεῶν καὶ ἀπὸ νῦν εὐλογῶ* – *and inscribed on a stele the powers of the gods and from now on I will praise them*; *TAMV* 1.318 (lines 32-34): *εὐλογοῦμεν στηλογραφήσαντες τὰς δυνάμεις τῶν θεῶν* – *having inscribed the powers of the god on a stele we praise them*.

¹³⁶ Schnabel, "Divine Tyranny," 167.

¹³⁷ Petzl, "Beichtinschriften," no. 6 = *SEG* 39.1279 (lines 20-21) from Kollyda and the same formula in *TAMV* I.213 (lines 10-11).

¹³⁸ Schnabel, "Divine Tyranny," 167-8.

¹³⁹ Schnabel, "Divine Tyranny," 160.

or service in the sanctuary of the offended god might be required as expiation.¹⁴⁰ The fees and fines imposed for acts and rituals were costs in addition to the setting up of steles and carving of the inscription. The processes of dealing with the transgressions of community members became a lucrative source of income for local sanctuaries, a further example of their capacity for survival against the mainstream cultural influences.¹⁴¹



Figure 6: Confession stele from the Katakekaumene area in Lydia dated 166/7 CE. The well-carved stone reports a fine of 175 denarii paid to the temple for release from oaths taken in the name of Mēn Axiottenos. A figure of the god is placed above the text, and the crescent moon symbolic of Mēn is incised into the pediment.¹⁴²

Ricl refers to the processes around confession as an industry which extended to sales and inheritance taxes.¹⁴³ Clearly in a context of the cultural expansion of Hellenism confession practices provided financial

¹⁴⁰ Ricl, “A Forgotten Confession-Inscription,” 38.

¹⁴¹ Ricl, “Society and Economy,” 98.

¹⁴² Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” 70 no. 58 = *SEG* 37.1000 (lines 9-12): ἵνα λύονται οἱ ὄρκοι τῷ | ὀνόματι τοῦ Ἀξιοττηνοῦ, ὥστε ὁ | λύων ὄρκους δαπανήσει δηνάρια ἑ- | κατὸν ἑβδομήκοντα πέντε - *so that oaths taken in the name of (Mēn) Axiottenos may be released, so that the one being released from the oaths will pay one hundred and seventy five denarii.*

¹⁴³ Ricl, “Society and Economy,” 98.

opportunity for rural priesthoods and temples which might otherwise be struggling to adapt and flourish.

Frequently the steles were inscribed with a glorification of the god/s' power and profession of faith.¹⁴⁴ The expression of the god's power was a main part of the purpose of confession,¹⁴⁵ related to the state of humility a person felt before the gods.¹⁴⁶ An attitude of submissive humility characterised the religious situation responding to change in western Asia Minor.¹⁴⁷ The human sense of powerlessness was a conscious result of trying to work out how and why misfortune happened. The confession texts were a way this was expressed. The perception of human humility is not the same as humiliation, as Schnabel presents.¹⁴⁸ In his view the steles were public humiliation aimed at highlighting the power of the god, that all people would see it and acknowledge the greatness of the divinity. Public humiliation led to permanent loyalty to the powerful god who could so influence the course of human living. I think the confessions offered to the god/s reflected awe and fear felt toward the god/s rather than the personal condemnation implied in Schnabel.

The visually imposing confession steles acted as warnings to others not to similarly transgress.¹⁴⁹ Texts which warn the reader not to offend

¹⁴⁴ Petzl, "Beichtinschriften," 40 no. 34 = *TAMV* 1.464 (lines 14-18): Ἀφίας καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς Ἀλέ- | ξανδρος, Ἄτταλος, Ἀπολ<ώ>νιος, Ἄμιο- | ν ἐστήσομεν τὴν στήλην καὶ ἐνεγράψομ- | εν τὰς δυνάμεις τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ νῦν εὐλ- | ογοῦμεν – *Aphia and her children Alexandros, Attalos, Apolonios, Amion set up the stele and inscribed the powers of the god and from now on we praise them.*

¹⁴⁵ Petzl and Malay, "New Confession Inscription," 470.

¹⁴⁶ Petzl and Malay, "New Confession Inscription," 471 refers to the contrast between the human and divine spheres in relation to the inscription provided in full at the end of this chapter. *SEG* 37.1001 = Petzl, "Beichtinschriften," 73-6 no. 59: (lines 22-3) where Syntyche acts according to human ways: ὅτι τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων μᾶλλον ἐπό- | ησεν ἢ τοῦ θεοῦ – *because she acted out of human ways rather than of god.* It was because of this gulf of inferiority and failure to honour the god that Syntyche was punished.

¹⁴⁷ Kraabel, "Ἰψιστος," 82.

¹⁴⁸ Schnabel, "Divine Tyranny," 178.

¹⁴⁹ *MAMA* IV.280 (lines 10-13): παραγέλω πάσις | μηδὶνα καταφρο- | νεῖ τῶν θε- | ῶν – *I announce to all that no one offend the gods.* In *MAMA* IV.283 Soterchos warns others not to make his mistakes; *JHS* 10.217 no. 1 lines 5-8 (cited in Miller, "Apollo

the power of the god indicate how vulnerable people felt before gods who in their mind could and did inflict adversity on them. Anything that might be regarded, even retrospectively, as disrespect against a god invited divine punishment.¹⁵⁰

Visual representations of the message contained in the text were important in the public context of the steles. Sometimes an identifying symbol, such as the crescent moon of Mēn accompanied the inscription.¹⁵¹ (See image above.) The visual representations say much to those who could not read. The impact of carved reliefs and symbols should not be underestimated. A sinner holding a right arm upwards to adore the god visually represented the power of the god/s.¹⁵²

Mitchell says the raised hand of the confessor on a stele indicated the honesty of the confession.¹⁵³ The priest may be standing next to the sinner acting as an officiant in the process, sometimes holding wreath and staff, and sometimes even the public are represented. The wrongdoing itself may appear as a relief.¹⁵⁴ Body parts that have been punished are also visually represented.¹⁵⁵ These images spoke to the people, they set the context of the confession and they reinforced the message of the text.

Lairbenos,” 64): παραγγέλλω μη- | δένα καταφρονεῖν | τῷ Λαιρμηνῶ, ἐπεὶ ἔξει | τὴν ἐμὴν στή[λλ]ην ἔξενπλον – *I announce that no one offend Lairmenos, there he will have the example of my stele.*

¹⁵⁰ Petzl and Malay, “A New Confession Inscription,” 468-9.

¹⁵¹ This is an especially common symbol appearing on the confession steles. See for example: Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” 5 no. 4 = *SEG* 38.1229; Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” 7 no. 5 = *SEG* 38.1237; Petzl and Malay, “New Confession Inscription,” plate 1; Petzl; “Beichtinschriften,” 73 no. 59 = *SEG* 37.1001.

¹⁵² Examples may be seen in Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” 11 no. 6, 14 no. 7, 19 no.11, 21 no 12, 29 no. 20, 43 no. 35, 46 no. 37 (a man and his two sons), 114 no. 97.

¹⁵³ Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1, 192.

¹⁵⁴ Schnabel, “Divine Tyranny,” 162.

¹⁵⁵ From the images contained in Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” the various body parts are represented: eyes – 59 no. 50, 110 no. 90; leg – 91 no. 70, 98 no. 75, arm – 101 no. 78; breasts – 91 no. 70; foot – 106 no. 83; male genitals – 129 no. 110.

note 18 cites for eyes: Petzl, *Beichtinschriften* 5.16.50.70.90.99; breasts: Petzl, *Beichtinschriften* 70.95, *SEG* 35.1205; feet: *SEG* 35.1175, 1178; toes: *SEG* 35.1187; male genitals: *SEG* 35.1174.



Figure 7: Confession steles depicting body parts which have been punished. From top left to right: eyes, breasts and leg, leg, male genitals and feet, arm. Petzl, "Beichtinschriften," 59 no. 50; 101, 78; 98 no. 75; 91 no. 70; 129 no. 110.

The confession texts usually record that the transgressor was punished,¹⁵⁶ but sometimes it was the relatives of a person.¹⁵⁷ The punishment itself was usually inscribed. Sometimes the sinner was detained in the temple.¹⁵⁸ Insanity,¹⁵⁹ unconsciousness and death¹⁶⁰ may be recorded among many other offences.¹⁶¹ Sometimes the transgression was not the fault of the person punished, as in the case of a woman who was raped by her husband while she was serving as a priest in the sanctuary of Apollo Lairbenos.¹⁶² Sometimes punishment is not specified, which Schnabel says is an indication that it is not so much the gravity of the offence but the fact of divine punishment that is important for the community to note.¹⁶³ Punishment was an expression of the power of the god.

Punishment by the gods was not unique to Asia Minor.¹⁶⁴ In Greek oral and literary tradition the *Odyssey* of Homer reports the ten years that Odysseus is led astray from his homeland of Ithaka for offending the god Poseidon. Offence against the gods, even if unintended, always

¹⁵⁶ TAMV I.231, 317, 326, 440.

¹⁵⁷ TAMV I.464.

¹⁵⁸ Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” 39 no. 33 (lines 1-5): Ἀπολλ[ω]- [νί]ου ἐνποδισθ[ῆ]- | σα ἐν τῷ ναῶ ἐκο- | λάσθη ὑπὸ τῶν θε- | ῶν - *I fettered Apollonios in the temple when he was punished by the gods.*

¹⁵⁹ TAMV 1.318. Tatias has been accused of giving her son a poison to make him mad.

¹⁶⁰ The death even of a child is reported as a punishment by the god – Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” 73-6 no. 59 = *SEG* 37.1001 (lines 13-14): Ἀφίαν | Γλύκωνος οὐσαν παρθένον διέρηξε - (*and*) *destroyed Apphia daughter of Glukon who was a girl.* Violent death emphasised by the word διέρηξε is here implied for the child-thief. The designation παρθένος at lines 14, 17 imply that Apphia is a young girl. See Petzl and Malay, “New Confession Inscription,” 464 and note 18. See commentary on full text below: Syntyche’s confession. See also Schnabel, “Divine Tyranny,” 163.

¹⁶¹ Schnabel, “Divine Tyranny,” 169, 172: “This broad range of misdeeds that the gods punish by inflicting illness or other calamities on the sinner may perhaps be taken to express the omnipotence of the god over the entire range of human activity.”

¹⁶² Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” 136-7 no. 117 = *JHS* 10, 219 no. 4 cited in K. Miller, “Apollo Lairbenos,” 63: Ἀτ]θεῖς Ἀγαθημέ- | ρου ἱερὰ βιαθῖσα | ὑπὸ αὐτοῦ κὲ ἡμα- | ρτήσα(σα) ἐ-τήκω | κολαθεῖσα ἐπὸ τοῦ θε- | οῦ· ἐπὶ ὃ κ(ε) ἐστηλογ- | ράφησεν παραγ(γ)- | ἐλ(λ)ων μηδένα κα- | ταφρονεῖ - *Attheis (wife of) Agathermeros a priest suffered violence (rape) by her husband and bore sin being punished by the god. Upon which she also inscribed a stele giving the word that no one despise (him).*

¹⁶³ Schnabel, “Divine Tyranny,” 163.

¹⁶⁴ Schnabel, “Divine Tyranny,” 164.

resulted in harsh punishment. What was unique in Asia Minor is the compilation of punishment and subsequent processes on a public monument.

In the confession process the symbol of the sceptre represented the authority of the god/s of justice and vengeance. A person who thought they were wronged could apply to the sanctuary to have the sceptre laid out in public (probably on the altar),¹⁶⁵ invoking the god to enact justice.¹⁶⁶ The uttering of oaths or curses,¹⁶⁷ or lodging written complaints in the temple were also involved.¹⁶⁸ The difficulty of interpreting some obscure confession texts may be as Mitchell says, because they were written versions of statements made in the sanctuary of the god.¹⁶⁹

These temple practices acted as a means of justice within rural precincts which locals could draw upon when other courses of legal action failed.¹⁷⁰ People invoking the gods believed the gods had the power to intervene and call a person to justice.¹⁷¹ This was especially so when the offence was against the sacred rules, property and personnel of a sanctuary. Thus, a woman named Trophime offended the god when she refused to present in a timely fashion for service in the sanctuary. The god punished her by madness and ordered her to

¹⁶⁵ Ricl, "Society and Economy," 100.

¹⁶⁶ *TAMV* 1.318 (lines 9-13): ἡ δὲ Τατίας ἐπέστησεν | σκῆπτρον καὶ ἄρας ἔθηκεν | ἐν τῷ ναῷ ὡς ἱκανοποιῦ- | σα περὶ τοῦ πεφημισθαι αὐ- | τὴν ἐν συνειδήσει – *and Tatias set up the sceptre and placed the imprecations in the sanctuary as satisfaction made for what has been spoken about her in the joint knowledge.*

¹⁶⁷ *TAMV* I.318 (line 10): καὶ ἄρας ἔθηκεν.

¹⁶⁸ Ricl, "Society and Economy," 100.

¹⁶⁹ Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1, 192.

¹⁷⁰ Ricl, "Society and Economy," 100.

¹⁷¹ Petzl, "Beichtinschriften," 3 no. 3 = *TAMV* 1.159 reporting the theft of clothing from a bath house. The justice of the god invoked, the thief confessed (lines 2-8): Ἐπεὶ ἐπεστάθη σκῆ- | πτρον, εἴ τις ἐκ τοῦ βαλανείου τι | κλέψι – κλαπέντος οὖν εἵματιού | ὁ θεὸς ἐνεμέσῃσε τὸν κλέπτην | καὶ ἐπόησε μετὰ χρόνον τὸ εἶμά- | τιον ἐνεγκῖν ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, καὶ ἐ- | ξωμολογήσατο – *Seeing that the sceptre was set up, someone from out of the bathhouse, a thief, stole a garment; therefore the god was angry at the thief and after some time made him bring the garment to the god, and he (the thief) confessed in full.* See also Petzl and Malay, "A New Confession Inscription," 464 on theft occasioning a divinity's justice.

set up a stele recording her disobedience and to enrol herself in service to the gods.¹⁷²

In this way, rural temples functioned as law courts. The legal entities were the gods.¹⁷³ The sceptre ceremony was an opening ritual for a legal hearing. The case was given over to the god. The sceptre operated as a divine symbol in front of which plaintiff and respondent put forth their dispute. After what Riçl calls a “quasi-judicial process”¹⁷⁴ a confession or oath of innocence was given. An oath of innocence incurred a conditional self-curse. This laid the way for the gods to open an inquiry, prosecute, punish. This detailed process in Lydian inscriptions is recorded on πιττάκια, πινακίδια, τάβλαι.¹⁷⁵ Riçl suggests tablets depicting these processes would have been common in temples.¹⁷⁶ One such *pittakion* containing accusation, offering to the god in anticipation of divine punishment and likely consequences, has been found as a bronze tablet with a hole in it so it could be hung in public view.¹⁷⁷ This evidence shows that justice at the hands of the

¹⁷² Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” 68 no. 57 = *TAMV* 1.460 from Gölde in north east Lydia, 118/9 CE: Ἔτους σγ', μη[νός] Ἄρτεμεσίους ς'. Ἐ- | πὶ Τροφίμη Ἄρτεμιδώρου Κι- | κιννάδος κληθεῖσα ὑπὸ τοῦ | θεοῦ ἰς ὑπηρεσίας χάριν μὴ | βουληθοῦσα ταχέος προσελ- | θεῖν, ἐκολάσето αὐτήν καὶ μα- | νῆναι ἐποίησεν· ἠρώτησε οὖν Μη- | τέρα Ταρσηνὴν καὶ Ἄπόλλωνα Τάρσι- | ον καὶ Μῆνα Ἄρτεμιδώρου Ἄξι- | οττηνὸν Κορεσα κατέχοντα, | καὶ ἐκέλευσεν στηλλογραφεῖ- | θῆναι νέμεσιν καὶ καταγρά- | ψαι ἑμαυτὴν ἰς ὑπερεσίαν | τοῖς θεοῖς – *In the year ?? in the month of Artemisios. Trophime wife of Artemidoros Kinnados having been called by the god into grateful service was not willing to quickly come, (the god) punished her and made her to to be driven mad; so she asked the Mother Tarsene and Mēn Artemidorou Axiottenos Koresa to hold her and he commanded the punishment to be written on a stele and to enrol myself into service to the gods.* Similarly, Babou in *CIG* 4142 ignored a divine command to become a ἱέρεια, priest of the god.

¹⁷³ Again, this concept was not new to ancient thought. In Greek mythological tradition of Aeschylus' trilogy the *Oresteia*, Orestes was judged by the Fates in a divine court of law for matricide. When guilt appeared imminent, Orestes called upon the god Apollo for justice.

¹⁷⁴ Riçl, “Society and Economy,” 100-101.

¹⁷⁵ Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” 44 no. 36 = *SEG* 35.1157 (lines 4-7): ἐπὶ τὸ βῆμά του ἀ- | νέβη καὶ ἠρεύνησεν τὸ | βῆμα καὶ τὰς τάβλας αὐ- | τοῦ· – *ascending onto the bema and made enquiry on the bema and his tables*; 76-7 no. 60 (lines 5-7) = *TAMV* 1.251: Ἄρτε- | μίδωρος πίττακιον ἔ- | δωκεν – *Artemidoros gave the pittakion (leaf out of a writing tablet)*. See also Schnabel, “Divine Tyranny,” 166.

¹⁷⁶ Riçl, “Society and Economy,” 101.

¹⁷⁷ Petzl, “Beichtinschriften,” no. 60 = *SEG* 28.1568.

gods was a serious and significant part of the religious activities of rural Asia Minor. As Riel writes:

For the villagers, divine justice was not something abstract. They firmly believed that the gods would punish the transgressor and help the injured party, so that human intervention was needed only on some ‘technical points’ during the process of establishing connection with the divine world. After that, it was just a question of time and patience until the punished transgressor confessed his guilt and redressed the wrong he had done.¹⁷⁸

The god anticipated praise and glorification as a result of distributing justice: ἀπὸ νῦν εὐλογῶ/εὐλογοῦμεν, from now on I/we praise (the god). The mediatorial role of the gods, especially those named in many of the texts, including Mēn and Apollo, indicate that a higher power was intended as the object of dedication, beyond these figures. The intention toward a higher power suggests that the confession texts express a form of monotheism. The role of pagan gods in the processes of mediation to a highest god will be discussed more fully in Chapter Six.

The confession texts were a means of individual response to the divine. They were unique in the cultural environment of Asia Minor. They were expressions toward god that emerged in a new religious situation which could not have happened in traditional religion.

5.6.2 Syntyche’s confession

More costly and complex inscriptions were highly detailed. From Maionia in the Katakekaumene area of Lydia comes an elaborate confession inscription of twenty-five lines. The stele is visually imposing, made of white marble, 1.03 metres high, 0.51 metres wide. A representation of the crescent moon of the god Mēn is incised in the top

¹⁷⁸ Riel, “Society and Economy,” 101.

centre.¹⁷⁹ The dedication is to Mēn Axiottenos by Syntyche. Being suspected of stealing an expensive gemstone from her husband Theogenes, Syntyche prayed to Mēn Axiottenos to help her discover it. The stone was found, but it had been badly damaged by fire. The thief was a girl, Apphia, whom Mēn destroyed for the crime. The girl's mother Glukon requested Syntyche to remain silent about Apphia's guilt, which offended the power of the god. Mēn therefore ordered Syntyche to record the punishment in his temple. The fault was that Syntyche had acted in the interest of the girl's mother rather than the god's. The report was duly inscribed on the stone and placed in public view.

This complete text displays the sequence of transgression, punishment, confession and divine order.¹⁸⁰ I provide the text and my translation below as a summary of how a confession text appeared on a stele as an example of the various aspects of the confession process.

1	Μηνὶ Ἀρτεμιδώρου Ἀξιοτηνῶ [space of three lines]	<i>Syntychē (wife of) Theogenes (set this up) to Mēn Artemidorou Axiot(t)enos;</i>
2	Συντύχη Θεογένου· εὐρόντος αὐ –	<i>her husband Theogenes found</i>
3	τῆς Θεογένου τοῦ ἀνρὸς λιθάριον ὑα –	<i>a hyacinth stone</i>
4	κίνθιον, εἶτα κειμένου αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ	<i>and then laying it in her house</i>

¹⁷⁹ Petzl and Malay, "A New Confession Inscription," 460-61, plate 1 depict the photograph and text of this inscription. At the time of writing (1987), the stone was housed in the Archaeological Museum at Manisa, inventory no. 5414. See also Petzl, "Beichtinschriften," 73-6 no. 59 = *SEG* 37.1001.

¹⁸⁰ Petzl, "Beichtinschriften," 3 no. 3 = *TAMV* I.159 is another example of the full sequence. This text also includes reference to the setting up of the sceptre, symbol of divine judgement, and conveyance of the command through an angel.

- 5 αὐτῆς ἐκλάπη τὸ λιθάριον, καὶ ζητούσης *the stone was stolen, and while seeking*
- 6 αὐτῆς καὶ βασανιζομένης ἐπεύξατο *it and being put to the test she prayed*
- 7 Μηνὶ Ἀξιοττηνῶ περὶ αὐτοῦ ἵνα αὐτὴν *to Mēn Axiottenos about it in order that she*
- 8 ἱκανοποιήσι, καὶ εὐρέθη κατακεκαυμένον *might get satisfaction, and and it was found burned*
- 9 καὶ ἠφανισμένον, ἐνδεμένον ἐν λινου – *and tarnished, walled up in a linen cloth*
- 10 δίῳ ὑπὸ τοῦ κλέπτου τεθειμένον ἐπὶ *by the thief who had put it in*
- 11 τὸν τόπον, οὗ ἔκειτο ὀλόκληρον· οὕτως *the place where it had lain (when) complete; and so*
- 12 τε ἐπιφανεῖς ὁ θεὸς ἐν μιᾷ καὶ τριακοσ – *the god manifested on the thirty first day*
- 13 τῇ τὴν κλέψασα[ν] καὶ τοῦτο πυήσασα[ν] Ἀφίαν *and destroyed Apphia daughter of Glukon, who*
- 14 Γλύκωνος οὔσαν παρθένον διέρηξε· *was a girl, for being the thief and having done this;*
- 15 περι<σ>υρούσης¹⁸¹ τε αὐτῆς τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ *and she (Syntyche) ridiculed the god's power*
- 16 θεοῦ διὰ τὸ ἠρωτῆσθαι ὑπὸ τῆς μητρὸς *because she had been asked by the girl's*
- 17 τῆς παρθένου, ἵνα σειγῆσι, καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ – *mother that she might keep silent, and the god*

¹⁸¹ Petzl and Malay, “A New Confession Inscription,” 469 corrects ΠΕΡΙΚΙΥΡΟΥΣΗΣ of the inscription to περι<σ>υρούσης from the verb περισύρω, meaning to ridicule. This word occurs in another confession inscription at TAMV I.231.10 in a different context, making the interpretation in both inscriptions difficult.

- 18 το ἐνεμέσησε, ὅτι οὐκ ἐξεφάντευ – *became angered at this, because Syntychē did not*
- 19 σε¹⁸² οὐδὲ ὕψωσε τὸν θεὸν ἢ Συντύχη· διό – *make known or exalt the god; therefore*
- 20 τι ἐποίησεν αὐτήν ἐπὶ τέκνου Ἡρακλεί – *he made her set up the wrath (description of it)*
- 21 δου ἐτῶν ἰγ' νέμεσιν ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον αὐτοῦ *at his place when her child Herakleides was thirteen*
- 22 στήσαι, ὅτι τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων μᾶλλον ἐπό – *years old, because she did things according to human beings*
- 23 ησεν ἢ τοῦ θεοῦ. ν Συντύχη Ἀπολλωνίου *rather than the god. Syntychē daughter of Apollonios*
- 24 θυγάτηρ καὶ Μελτίνης ἢ προγεγραφοῦ – *and Meltinē wrote about the aforementioned*
- 25 σα τὴν νέμεσιν. *divine wrath.*

This well-preserved example of a confession stele indicates how important the practice of confession had become in the second and early third centuries. The stele itself would have been costly (even if the stone was relatively accessible during this period). The incising is well executed and the words far from the “artless narrative,” as Mitchell has described much of the confession corpus.¹⁸³ The text reflects the powerlessness felt by Syntyche as a series of events unfolded which retrospectively she determined was caused by lack of honour given to Mēn, the god to whom she prayed for assistance in finding her husband’s lost gemstone. It seemed that Syntyche herself was the subject of questioning about the loss, and perhaps her status as a woman contributed to her fear of being blamed for theft.

¹⁸² Petzl and Malay, 469 claim ἐκφαντεύω as *hapax legomenon*. The meaning of ‘reveal,’ or ‘make known’ can be reasonably deduced from the root ἐκφαντ-. See 469 note 58.

¹⁸³ Mitchell, *Anatolia* 1, 192.

Clearly there was more at stake than the value of the gemstone in this confession sequence. The punishment of the child Apphia seems horribly out of proportion to the crime. It emphasises the perception that the gods were all powerful and concerned about being honoured and having that power glorified. Syntyche's own child Herakleides also seems to be involved in the events, indicating the pervasiveness of the god's influence felt by the family.

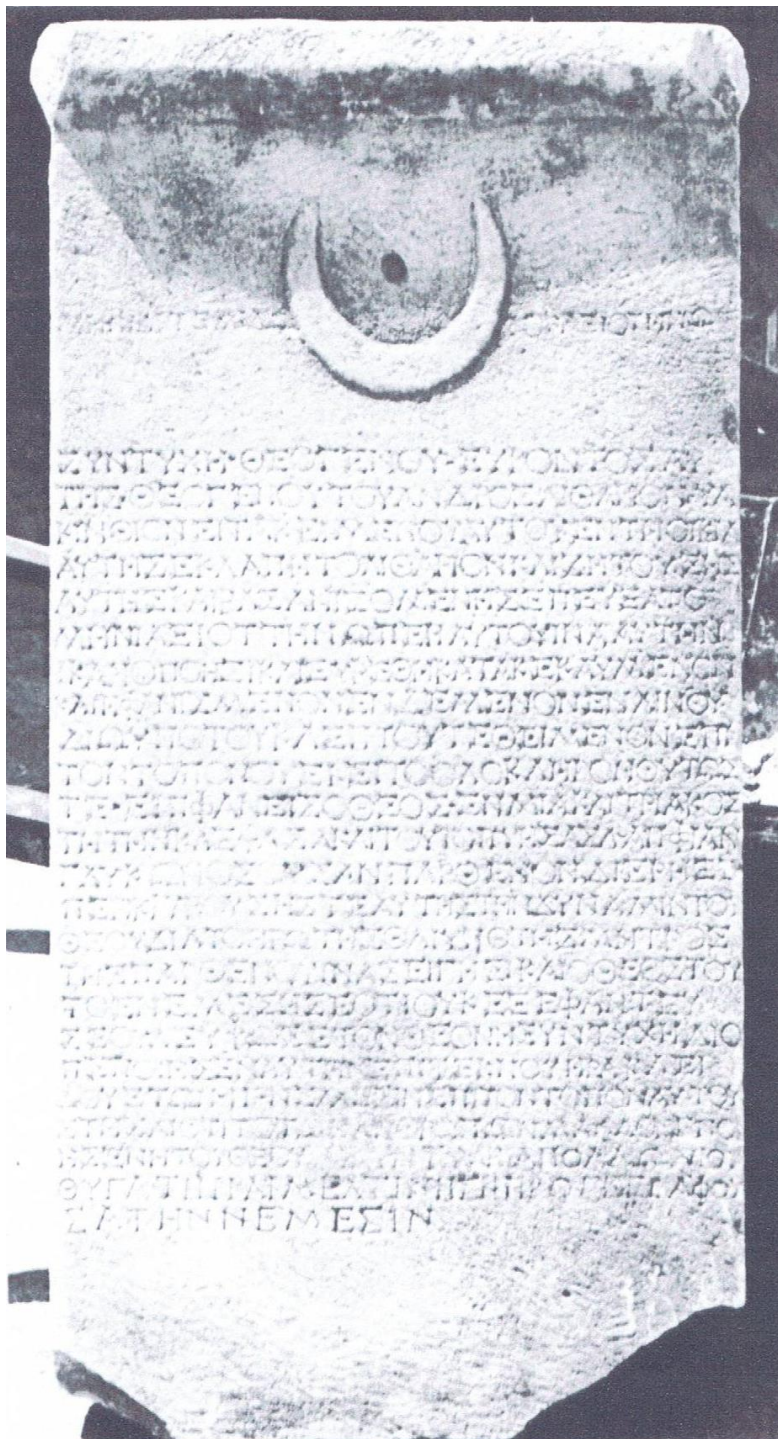


Figure 8: Syntyche's confession. Image of stone from Petzl and Malay, "New Confession Inscription," Plate 1.

5.6.3 Summing up public confession

Confession texts arose through the late first through to mid third century CE in Asia Minor. They were mostly a rural phenomenon related to the local sanctuaries that populated the landscapes of Lydia and Phrygia. The texts belong to indigenous minority groups and they provide a unique insight into the cultural environment of Asia Minor. They inform our understanding of the religious situation that emerged in these centuries beyond the scope of mainstream urban religion.

The texts are evidence of response to a changing cultural environment. Their appearance may represent a resistance to, or dissimulation from, the processes of Hellenisation. The confessions express the very ordinary concerns of ordinary people. They are valuable records of life in rural Asia Minor. The texts differ from other writing in the ancient world because they come from the contexts of people of very diverse social backgrounds. They are not solely the product of the privileged wealthy and educated.

The texts express a change in view toward god away from the limitations of traditional paganism. They display an attitude of humility before the all-pervasive power of the god/s, an understanding that god could and did become involved in every aspect of life. The confessions reveal an orientation of people toward a higher divine power beyond the god addressed on the stone. This suggests a 'proto-monotheism,' where people began to express a highest god through the cultic apparatus that was familiar. The rural sanctuary, local priesthoods, the names of indigenous gods, which were all part of the processes of public confession, had a role in a transition toward pagan monotheism.

There was a shift towards a more personalised relationship with god in the confessions, such as was not conceived within traditional paganism. The interaction of different cultural groups through

assimilation, the competition between new groups and the exchange of ideas enabled new, personalised relationships to manifest.

Local religious cults took advantage of the presence of cults of the new religious type and the increasing role of the individual to preserve and increase the esteem of rural sanctuaries. These cults extended their influence in the field of justice and the power of local priesthoods increased. The confession industry that developed was an extension of this power and growth. The stable conditions in the Roman provinces in the first and second centuries facilitated the production and establishment of the steles. By the time crises in the empire became apparent in the third century the epigraphic habit was quite established, meaning production continued through this troubled century, even at lower volume. Access to stone for inscribing also assisted in the prevalence of the steles.

5.7 The new religious situation and god beyond the mainstream

A new religious situation in Asia Minor came about through processes of change which drew people away from traditional paganism. These processes began as early as the second century BCE, but became more apparent in Asia Minor in the first three imperial centuries. New cults offering voluntary membership, spiritual, emotional and personal satisfaction, community activities, and a new form of identity characterised the new religious situation. In return, new cults required commitment and sometimes exclusivity. The rise in the role of the individual accompanied the new religious situation.

The presence of new cults offering new things provided a religious marketplace. Within the market competition for membership took place. The result of competition and new allegiances among people created conflict with the structures of traditional paganism, which

were expressed in family and state authority. In assimilation terms, traditional paganism was the means for integration with family groups and city. Whilst imperial authority continued in Asia Minor, allegiances shifted sideways to new groups. New religious groups created opportunities for acculturation with other groups and with the cultural mainstream. The competitive, assimilative environment made way for the exchange of ideas and the formation of new relationships with god and gods.

Evidence of the new religious situation appeared beyond mainstream Hellenistic culture in the practices of public confession. This mostly rural phenomenon belonged to minority indigenous groups in Phrygia and Lydia. The confessions express individual people in relationship with god. Before the god, they must appear humble and acknowledge that divine authority seeped into every aspect of life. Before god must glory and praise be given.

Texts appearing on stone steles recorded the confessions of individuals who had transgressed, received punishment, and responded to the god's power by setting up a monument. Whilst directed usually toward an indigenous justice god such as Mēn, Hosios and Dikaios, or Apollo (usually with an appended name such as Lairbenos), they did indicate that a higher power was behind the divine action. This is especially apparent in the revelations of transgression to the penitent through an *angelos*, or in an oracle. Through this evidence, a new expression of god and a new means of accessing god and of having a relationship with god happened beyond the mainstream.

6. TOWARDS A MONOTHEISTIC CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the new religious situation made way for monotheistic activity beyond the boundaries of traditional Judaism. The cultural environment was sown with the seeds of change. The presence of new religious cults, particularly those which members chose to join and displayed commitment to, the rise in influence of the individual, and the changing attitude towards god and gods opened the way for new ideas and practices. In minority group settings, such as the indigenous groups which developed the practices of public confession, and in the boundary spaces between minority groups and the mainstream, new ways of expressing one god arose. No longer was traditional paganism the only means of religious expression. God emerged beyond the mainstream.

Now I identify and discuss the types of pagan monotheism and the various definitions. I trace the theoretical background of pagan monotheism through Greek philosophy, giving attention to Xenophanes and Plato. I discuss the relationship of philosophical monotheism with traditional paganism. I then move to how the theory found practical application in the fertile ground of the new religious situation. I present the phenomena of abstract religious agents of divine justice, *angeloi* and the *theion* as ways of accessing a singular divine which were congruent with pagan monotheism. Within these phenomena and with the background of a philosophically constructed universe, I consider how the figures associated with monotheism operated as mediators to a superior divine. I conclude the chapter with investigation of pagan monotheism at Stratonikeia in Karia.

In this chapter, I make use of an inductive approach to evidence, as presented by Larry Hurtado, as an additional methodological tool to assimilation theory.¹

The background is then set for the next chapter's discussion of cults devoted to a single divinity, one highest god.

6.1 Identifying pagan monotheism

I discern pagan monotheism where there is the evidence that one entity as the ultimate source of divine expression was acknowledged in a pagan religious context. I find this evidence in philosophical, theological and ritual sources. Pagan monotheistic expressions belonged to the new religious situation. They were part of the wider cultural environment which was changing and adapting to new situations. Within the first three imperial centuries there is evidence from Asia Minor which indicates departure from traditional pagan polytheistic religious practices. It is tempting to categorise such practices too readily as part of a monotheistic 'movement' among pagans.² What initially appears to be cultic evidence of pagan monotheism stands in the foreground of a complex subject. As established in the previous chapter, the influences of traditional polytheistic religious practices on the structures of society were strong and enduring. They were embedded in civic processes, part of ordinary life. Each instance of potential pagan monotheism must therefore be subject to proper analysis.

Ritual pagan monotheism emerged in a culture of religious change. It was found in places at the assimilating edges of paganism, in minority

¹ As proposed by Larry Hurtado, "First Century Jewish Monotheism," *JSNT* 71 (1998): 3-26.

² The trend toward pagan monotheism noted by modern scholars is examined closely in Athanassiadi and Frede, *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*.

spaces outside of the mainstream.³ Expressions of the individual manifested in these creative spaces, freed from the constraints of religion that was defined by traditional practice and social integration.

Identifying pagan monotheistic practices begins initially with looking away from the places of mainstream religious activity. It is not a straightforward process of collating data from religious activities associated with one god. Monotheistic attitudes are seen in the places where people looked for divine justice, where they honoured god in abstract terms, where they sought mediation between human and the remote divine. These were part of deeper cultural change beginning from the edges, in minority groups. From any initial survey, these things do not necessarily indicate monotheism. Uncovering these attitudes and accompanying practices reveals evidence of a change in orientation toward god, a desire to enter a personal relationship with the god, a seeing the world through new eyes. These new things came together in a spectrum of pagan monotheism.

Like Judaism and emerging Christianity in this period, there is no one definition that incorporates every example of pagan monotheistic religious practice. Pagan cults which looked toward one god did not have a body of doctrine or set of beliefs. This would come later, after the establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, when competition and confrontation between cults began to be fully manifest. Then, Neoplatonist philosophers and Christians entered a dialogue in which much was held in common.⁴ Pagan monotheism is a more recognisable term of use for this later period.⁵ Nonetheless, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that pagan

³ Ritualistic pagan monotheism will be discussed especially in Chapter Seven, with emphasis on cults of Theos Hypsistos, the highest god. Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 126 refers to these cults as existing beyond mainstream Hellenistic contexts.

⁴ Mitchell and VanNuffelen, *One God*, 5.

⁵ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 188.

monotheism was a part of the new religious situation in earlier, less organised forms.

6.2 Defining pagan monotheism

There have been many attempts to define pagan monotheism, and to qualify its occurrences.⁶ Many of these qualifications appear to be convenience terms which allow an angle of scholarship or peculiar interest of a scholar to direct the investigation, as some of the examples below show.

The *Macquarie Dictionary* describes monotheism as: “the doctrine or belief that there is only one god.”⁷ This meaning is a simple break down of two Greek words, *monos*, alone, only, and *theos*, god – god alone, only god. This meaning does not take in the diversity and complexities of ancient religion however, in addition to the presumptions made in subsequent eras and new cultural contexts, and more must be said.

Monotheism is a modern term which had little meaning to the people of antiquity.⁸ It has been cast back onto a world which was alive with many gods and many cults. In this world, monotheistic-type cults, Judaeo-Christian and pagan, were minorities. There existed no equivalent word in the ancient world to describe the religious expressions grouped by various modern scholars as ‘monotheism.’ People then lived in an environment which supported many religious cults. Worship of one god or many gods happened. Traditional pagan religion did not set out the parameters of worship and belief in gods in the way that we expect of religion today. As described in the preceding

⁶ Peter Van Nuffelen discussed the theoretical problems of naming types of pagan monotheism is discussed in, “Pagan monotheism as a religious phenomenon,” in Mitchell and Van Nuffelen, *One God*, 17-21.

⁷ *Macquarie Australian Dictionary*.

⁸ Michael Frede, “The case for pagan monotheism in Greek and Graeco-Roman antiquity,” in Mitchell and Van Nuffelen, *One God*, 60.

chapter, traditional religion was an embedded cultural aspect. The components we today ascribe to religion – belief, choice and doctrine, were not regular features.⁹

In the English language, monotheism only started to be used in the seventeenth century, and began to be more widely used around the mid eighteenth century, entering the German, French and Italian languages even later.¹⁰ Not only the term ‘monotheism,’ but all of the modern vocabulary associated with religion can perpetuate unfounded assumptions about ancient religion.¹¹ This makes any discussion no less than biased.

To people of our era, monotheism usually refers to three of the world religions: Islam, Judaism and Christianity. Followers of these religions do not believe in or worship more than one god. There is substantial doctrine which sets out the beliefs and order of worship of this one god. This type of monotheism in the modern era is restrictive, limited, or exclusive. There is no room for acknowledging other gods.

The assumption that all pagan religion was polytheistic is deeply embedded in the modern psyche.¹² Conceiving of pagan monotheism is a relatively new idea in the study of Graeco-Roman religions.¹³

Polytheism was the usual expression of traditional Greek and Roman religion.¹⁴ The definition of ‘polytheism’ is: “the doctrine of, or belief in,

⁹ North, “Development of Religious Pluralism,” 177-8.

¹⁰ Frede, “The case for pagan monotheism,” 59-60, cites as an example of the introduction of ‘monotheism’ in the English language, H. More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness*, (London, 1660), 62.

¹¹ John North, “Pagan ritual and monotheism,” in Mitchell and Van Nuffelen, *One God*, 35 includes most of the words we use to describe religion – including ‘religion’ itself, along with ‘ritual,’ ‘belief,’ ‘faith,’ ‘sacrifice,’ ‘vow’ as modern tools of debate which are derived from anthropology, comparative religion and rival theologies.

¹² Van Nuffelen, “Pagan monotheism as a religious phenomenon,” 16, suggests that paganism is “intuitively seen as polytheistic.”

¹³ For examples of modern scholarly engagement with pagan monotheism see Van Nuffelen, “Pagan monotheism as a religious phenomenon,” 16 and note 2.

¹⁴ H. S. Versnel, “Thrice One: Three Greek Experiments in Oneness,” in B. Nevling Porter (ed.), *One God or Many?* (Transactions of the Casco Bay Assyriological Institute, Vol. 1, 2000), 80.

many gods or more gods than one.”¹⁵ Yet according to North, even the terms ‘polytheism’ and ‘polytheist’ were meaningless in a time before there was a widespread monotheistic alternative.¹⁶ Again, these terms have been imposed on the religious expressions of the ancient world from a much later time.

The adaptive cultural environment and developing religious situation gave rise to changes in engagement within and between various pagan cults. People who collectively or individually cannot be described as polytheists formulated new religious ideas and cult practices in this environment of change. Polytheism as a designation applied to all pagan cults does not adequately describe the range of experiences expressed in the first three imperial centuries in Asia Minor.¹⁷ Forms of polytheism were inclusive. This means that people accepted multiple gods within the religious system and placed value on the practice of devotion to more than one god. In the city of Rome, the building of the pantheon is a striking visible representation of the place of the polytheistic religious system in the structures of Roman culture.¹⁸

Even when one god was honoured specifically within systems of polytheism, such as a patron of a city,¹⁹ that god was not necessarily believed to be higher in status than another god. A god may have had a specific role within a community, and have become the object of special devotion and honour, but was still recognised to exist alongside other gods of similar and those of greater or lesser divine status.

¹⁵ *Macquarie Australian Dictionary*.

¹⁶ North, “Pagan ritual and monotheism,” 37. He refers the reader to a previous work (J. North, “Pagans, polytheists and the pendulum,” in W. V. Harris (ed.), *The Spread of Christianity in the First Four Centuries: Studies in explanation*, (Leiden: 2005), 131-4) in which he has argued against using polytheism as a valid term to describe the various pagan religious expressions.

¹⁷ North, “Pagan ritual and monotheism,” 37-8.

¹⁸ The second century CE pantheon, from $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\ \theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\omega\nu$, means a temple to ‘every god.’

¹⁹ From Asia Minor, the extent of references in honour of Zeus Panamaros at Stratonikeia for example, indicates Zeus was the patron of that city. Artemis was patron of Ephesos, Aphrodite of Aphrodisias.

Monotheism may also be inclusive. This means that honour and devotion offered to one god as highest existed alongside the many gods honoured in pagan polytheism. The complexities of early Judaism exemplify this.²⁰ Van Nuffelen writes of inclusive monotheism, that it, “can be reconciled with polytheism, as it recognises a deeper unity behind the multiple manifestations of the divine.”²¹ This unity has its basis in the Greek philosophical thought which will be discussed in the section below. An inclusive monotheism is tolerant of other gods. Versnel describes this as a “non-exclusive monotheism.”²²

A more widely used designation for “non-exclusive monotheism” is henotheism. Henotheism means the elevation of one god over others recognised to exist.²³ Henotheism may well sum up many cultic expressions in Asia Minor in the first four centuries CE, that whilst an individual or group may worship one god alone, it is within the recognised context of other gods. Thus, the Oinoanda oracle to be studied later in Chapter Eight, in which Apollo names himself as a lesser portion of god, could arguably be called henotheistic.²⁴

For the purposes of this thesis I shall regard what some scholars define more narrowly as henotheism under the umbrella of monotheism. I do

²⁰ For the complexities of early Jewish monotheistic practice regarding the worship of one god see Versnel, “Thrice One,” 86-7 and references in note 20.

²¹ Van Nuffelen, “Pagan religion as a religious phenomenon,” 20.

²² Versnel, “Thrice One,” 88.

²³ *Macquarie Australian Dictionary*. Chaniotis, “Megatheism,” 113 note 2, more selectively describes henotheism as, “appropriate as a designation of a very specific religious concept, the idea of the unity of god.” He cites the examples from *Orphicorum fragmenta* 239 Kern: εἰς Ἄϊδης, εἰς Ἥλιος, εἰς Διόνυσος, εἰς θεός ἐν πάντεσσι – *one Hades, one Helios, one Dionysos, one god in all*; and Dio Chrysostom *Oratio* 31.11.8-10: πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ ἀπλῶ τοὺς θεοὺς πάντας εἰς μίαν τιὰ ἰσχὺν καὶ δύναμιν συνάγουσιν – *many follow and make single all the gods into a certain one strength and power*. To Chaniotis, these examples influence him to choose the word ‘megatheism’ over henotheism. Others, such as H. S Versnel, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion I. Ter unus. Isis, Dionysos, Hermes: Three studies in henotheism*, (Leiden, 1990), 232-236 follow the more regular meaning of elevation of one god over others. For Versnel, “Thrice One,” 87-8, henotheism may be permanent “or restricted to a specific moment in personal adoration,” citing an example of a henotheistic moment being a hymn sung to one god in a polytheistic context.

²⁴ *SEG* XXVII 933.

this because I do not intend the work of this thesis to be about achieving a specific meaning of the word monotheism. I also do it because in the indistinct edges of cultural groups in which I base this study, narrow parameters of definition conflict with the diversity of evidence I am presenting and do not meet the findings of assimilation theory.

Qualifiers of monotheism can assist in particularising the monotheistic expression of a cult, but these may be limiting in use.²⁵ These have been developed to describe instances of monotheism, but there is no consensus in scholarship that these terms mean the same thing from one piece of research to the next. Words such as megatheism,²⁶ menotheism,²⁷ theomonism,²⁸ monolatry,²⁹ monism,³⁰ and panentheism,³¹ have been invented to describe what appears manifestly monotheistic but where ‘monotheism’ is deemed inadequate. These can help to distinguish between types or degrees of

²⁵ For examples, Van Nuffelen, “Pagan monotheism as a religious phenomenon,” 17, radical, true, absolute; Chaniotis, “Megatheism,” 112, soft, hierarchical, affective; and in Versnel, “Thrice One,” 87, exclusive, pluriform, temporary.

²⁶ Chaniotis, “Megatheism,” 113: “I use the term megatheism not as an alternative to monotheism or henotheism, but as a designation of an expression of piety which was based on a personal experience of the presence of god, represented one particular god as somehow superior to others, and was expressed through oral performances (praise, acclamations, hymns) accompanying, but not replacing, ritual actions.”

²⁷ W. F. Cobb, *Origins Judaicae. An Inquiry into Heathen Faiths as Affecting the Birth and Growth of Judaism*, (London: A. D. Innes and Co., 1895), 84 defines menotheism as: “that belief which sees One Eternal Spirit dwelling behind phenomena and manifesting Himself through them.”

²⁸ Van Nuffelen, “Pagan monotheism as a religious phenomenon,” 19 n. 16, citing H. Corbin, *Le Paradox du Monothéisme*, (Paris, 1981), 14-23.

²⁹ Versnel, “Thrice One,” 86, describes monolatry as the continuous and exclusive worship of one god without explicit denial of the existence of other gods. Versnel acknowledges monolatry as a similar designation to henotheism.

³⁰ Monism is a doctrine of one ultimate substance or principle, whether mind (idealism) or matter (materialism), or something that is neither mind nor matter but which undergirds both. *Macquarie Australian Dictionary*.

³¹ Van Nuffelen, “Pagan monotheism as a religious phenomenon,” 19 note 16 citing L. P. Van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Müller: A Life Devoted to the Humanities*, (2002), 347-349; B. Lang, “Monotheismus,” in *Handbuch der Religionwissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe III*, H. Cancik and others (eds.), (Stuttgart, Berlin and Cologne, 1993), 355. The term ‘panentheism,’ meaning ‘all in god’ was first derived by German philosopher Karl Christian Friedrich Krause in 1828. In discussion with Vicky Balabanski I acknowledge that panentheism has currency as a term in systematic theology. However, given the different field of study here I elect not to use it.

monotheism although they are in my opinion not generally accessible to wider readership. Sometimes the various terms applied to religious expressions are only slightly different from each other, making the field of study in monotheisms confusing.³²

In this study, I apply general terminology rather than specific terms in the discussion of ancient religions. I do this to communicate across a spectrum the ideas that were in currency. I intend to use ‘monotheism’ as a valid term for the manifestations of worship of one god in the first to third centuries CE in Asia Minor. I use ‘pagan monotheism’ as a broad term to reflect monotheistic tendencies outside of Judaism and Christianity. I do not intend it to mean a single religious instance or a single manifestation, as I will refer to diverse examples. My general use of pagan monotheism includes the qualifiers to monotheism which specify an expression of Greek and Roman religion.

Pagan monotheism is in this thesis a description of a type of religious expression in which one god is honoured as highest in ritual and practice, as well as theology.

6.3 Anachronism and Hurtado’s inductive method

Many years ago, the Greek philosophical notion of god as one, and that this one god existed within a context of religious polytheism, captured my imagination. My mind was alive with images from colourful childhood books of Greek and Roman mythology in which many gods ranged across heaven and earth, fabulous and distinct, each with different roles and areas of control. This long fascination ultimately led me to the questions raised in this thesis. Did some pagans worship one

³² Van Nuffelen, “Pagan monotheism as a religious phenomenon,” 18, points to the circular problem of trying to define monotheism by new words: “Even the deliberate creation of new terms to replace older ones immediately entangles the former into the ideological web of the latter.”

god? If so, how did this god exist among all others? Were the others not real to them? The seemingly comfortable presence of one god and many gods in the cultural context of the ancient world perplexes my modern, post-Christian mind. I expect to find one god *or* many gods, not combinations of these, such as appears from the evidence of at least the material covered in this thesis.

It is the influence of modern expectations like mine concerning ancient religions which contributes to a confusion which did not appear to exist among the people living in antiquity, in a situation of religious plurality.³³ Western thinking shaped by a history of religions tradition has contributed to misinforming our understanding of the role of certain figures in Greek and Roman religion that were related to monotheistic practices.³⁴ As a result, the parameters we have set in our modern perception of monotheism (pagan, Jewish, Christian) and polytheism do not necessarily correlate with the evidence of diverse practices which cross boundaries between religions and cults. The consequent effect of the Christianisation of the Roman Empire, including the bias of church writers, affected how modern generations viewed the religious practices of the ancient world. Categories of orthodoxy and heresies which shaped the development of Christianity did not have a place in the religious landscape that emerged in Asia Minor in the imperial era. At that time, in the environment of a new religious situation, many possibilities of religious expression existed.

I deal with anachronistic presuppositions formed out of a modern religious setting here as I engage with pagan religion. An inductive use of data assists with levelling out anachronism because it works with the evidence first rather than with conclusions that are already

³³ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 179 has established that a situation of religious plurality existed in Asia Minor. It is from establishing this basis that he refers to a new religious situation. The plurality of cults made way for choice and personal commitment.

³⁴ Belayche, "*Angeloi*," 45 refers to the influence of the tradition of the history of religions on modern study of Graeco-Roman religion.

known. Larry Hurtado has named an inductive approach to evidence.³⁵ Hurtado's paper is concerned with emphasising the monotheistic attitude expressed in first century CE Judaism. He does this in response to a diversity in opinion among scholars about whether Jews were monotheistic in the Graeco-Roman context.³⁶ Hurtado sets out his methodology for arguing his case carefully because of the diverging opinions. Hurtado has determined that an inductive process can work out whether ancient Jews were monotheistic and that any such conclusions can be used to assess Jewish self-understanding. Did Jews see themselves as monotheistic? Hurtado maintains this approach even when the evidence of Jewish self-understanding conflicts with modern ideals of Jewish monotheism.

An inductive use of data draws conclusions based from evidence alone. It differs from a deductive use of data. A deductive approach to data draws conclusions from facts that are already known or presumed. Hurtado's work is in Jewish monotheism, but it can be just as well applied to pagan monotheism. An inductive approach seeks to explain factual evidence. An inductive process is valuable in a study of ancient monotheism because an emphasis on evidence acts as a counterweight to modern anachronistic preconceptions. These modern preconceptions must be identified and dismissed when they are not based in the facts of the evidence itself.

Hurtado describes the deductive method as one which tries to draw conclusions which are 'known' to fit into evidence. He suggests that a deductive approach has dominated studies, and this distorts the value of the evidence.³⁷ He says Jewish data has been misused to reach

³⁵ Hurtado, "First-Century Jewish Monotheism," 5-9 sets out the method for arguing his case.

³⁶ Hurtado, "First-Century Jewish Monotheism," 5, refers to Peter Hayman, "Monotheism – A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?" *JJS* 42 (1991): 1-15, and Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study in Israel's Second God*, (London: SPCK, 1992), who argue for ditheistic tendencies in Jewish religion. He understands ditheism as worship of god and of the personified glory of god.

³⁷ Hurtado, "First-Century Jewish Monotheism," 5-6.

unsubstantiated claims. He writes: “It is mistaken to assume that we can evaluate ancient Jewish texts and beliefs in terms of whether or how closely they meet our own preconceived idea of ‘pure’ monotheism.”³⁸ A deductive use of data risks imposing ideas from a different world.

Addressing the methodological issue of anachronistic presuppositions of what is and is not monotheism in the ancient context is achievable through an inductive handling of the evidence. An inductive lens on data, within the framework of assimilation theory, works specifically to control anachronistic intrusion on the evidence of monotheism in the cultural environment.

6.4 The philosophical foundation of pagan monotheism

The philosophical idea of one god is an opening which leads deep into the complexities of ancient Graeco-Roman religion and how people thought about god. As the subject matter is large, I will here refer briefly and simply to the legacy of two philosophers who appear to propose monotheistic theories: a Presocratic and Postsocratic, Xenophanes and Plato. I will then argue that whilst the philosophy of a select culturally intellectual group alone cannot be used to substantiate a case for pagan monotheism, it does provide a background of ideas which have been transmitted throughout the cultural environment of Asia Minor and which have had some effect on subsequent ritual behaviour.

The transmission of philosophical ideas about one god to the wider cultural environment is complex. How much and how far ideas were carried is difficult to discern. Yet it does appear that through at least Xenophanes and Plato, the transmission of these ideas into the

³⁸ Hurtado, “First-Century Jewish Monotheism,” 6.

practice of ‘ordinary’ (ie., non-intellectual) people did occur. I now show that the practices arising out of a new religious situation do have some foundation in intellectual monotheism and philosophical ideas of one god.

Monotheistic ideas have been part of Greek philosophy from at least the sixth century BCE. Xenophanes of Kolophon, from the group of sixth century BCE presocratic philosophers known as the Eleatics, clearly named one god, and named this god as greatest:³⁹

εἷς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος. οὐτι δέμας
θνητοῖσιν ὁμοῖος οὔτε νόημα⁴⁰
*one god is greatest among both gods and human beings. By no
means like mortals in either body or mind*

It is difficult to presume monotheism as such from this one fragment, because so little of Xenophanes’ material is extant. There is always the danger of reading a different theology into such a limited context.⁴¹

There are four extant fragments which give insight into how Xenophanes conceived the true nature of the divine.

³⁹ According to Versnel, “Thrice One,” 91 Xenophanes may be dated as being active c.540 BCE.

⁴⁰ Xenophanes Fragment 23, Clement *Miscellanies* 5.109. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), 308 says that the ‘one god’ expression used here by Xenophanes draws “entirely on customary formulae: one is greatest and for that very reason is not alone,” meaning it is not innovative but simply an elevation of a one god over others (henotheism).

⁴¹ This is a deductive approach to evidence, which as I signalled above, I will attempt to avoid.

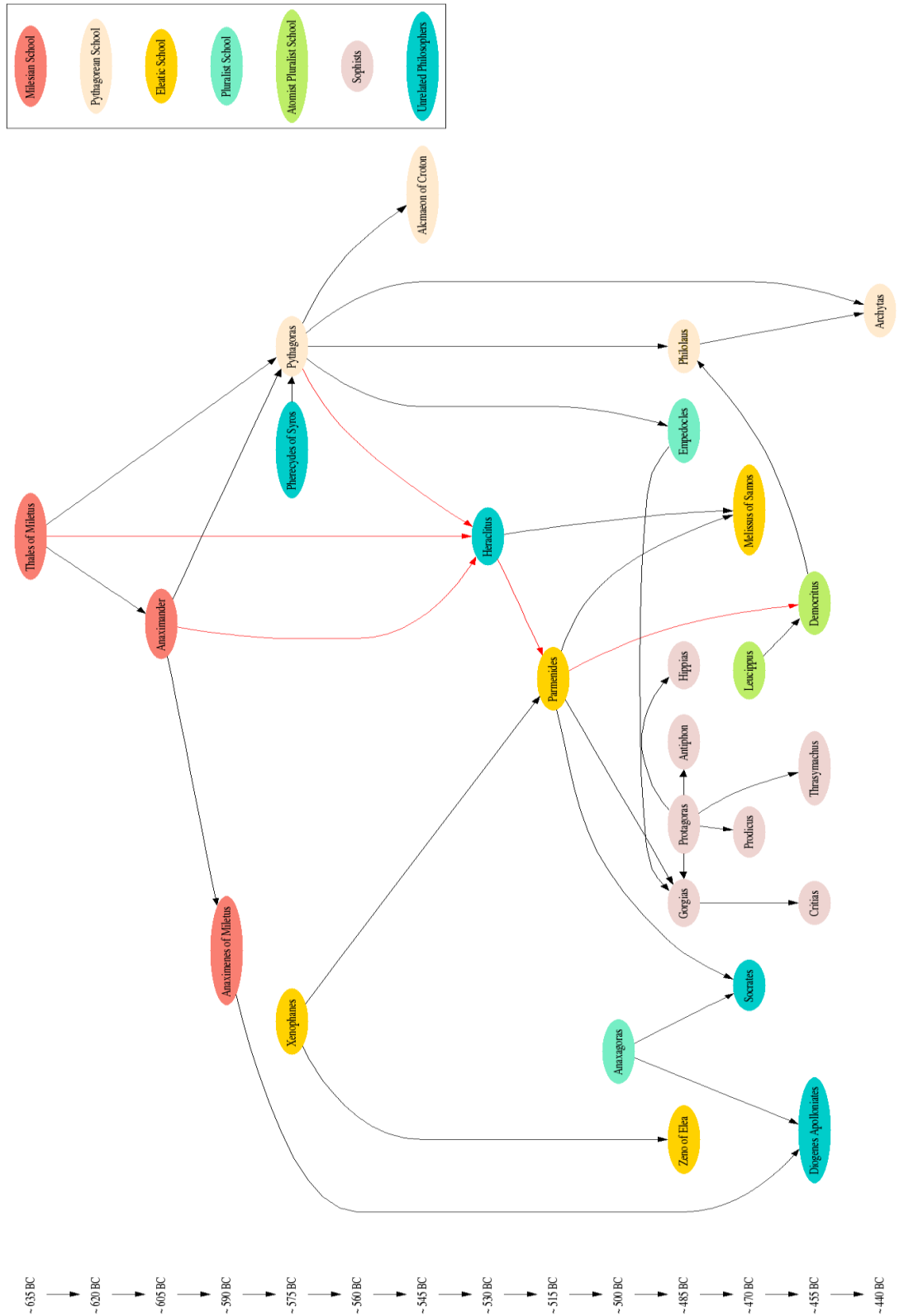


Figure 9: Representation of Bryan Enders' graphical relationship among the various groups of Presocratic philosophers and thinkers: http://en.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Presocratic_graph.png. I acknowledge that designation of various philosophers to certain groups is not necessarily uniform among scholars, however for the purposes of providing a basic outline and approximately situating the different Presocratic thinkers and schools, I offer this.

In addition to the above (Fragment 23), there follows:

οὔλος ὄρη, οὔλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὔλος δέ τ' ἀκούει⁴²
as a whole she sees, as a whole she thinks, and as a whole she hears

ἀλλ' ἀπάνευσε πόνοιο νόου φρενὶ πάντα κραδαίνει⁴³
but from far away she shakes everything with a thought of her mind

αἰεὶ δ' ἐν ταύτῳ μίμνει κινούμενος οὐδέν, οὐδὲ μετέρχεσθαί μιν
ἐπιπρέπει ἄλλοτε ἄλλη⁴⁴
but always she remains in the same way never moving, nor is it fitting that she come and go to other places at one time or another

Xenophanes shows from just these four fragments that he conceived of one god who had exceptional power, consciousness and cosmic influence. He does not go as far as saying that no other being is deserving of the name of a god.⁴⁵

When referring to one god, it is the oneness of divinity, or unity of god that Xenophanes implies⁴⁶ (Fragment 24). Xenophanes may therefore more accurately be called a monist,⁴⁷ an upholder of one ultimate principle, not a monotheist. Taking this into account, along with the limitations of available evidence, there is still insight into early philosophical monotheistic ideas to be gained, which later philosophers would develop more fully.

⁴² Xenophanes Fragment 24, (Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 9.144 = *Against the Physicists* 1.144).

⁴³ Xenophanes Fragment 25, (Simplicius *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 23.19).

⁴⁴ Xenophanes Fragment 26, (Simplicius *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 23.10).

⁴⁵ J. H. Leshner, *Xenophanes of Colophon, Fragments: A Text and Translation with a Commentary by J. H. Leshner*, Phoenix Presocratics Series 4, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 99.

⁴⁶ Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 191.

⁴⁷ Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 4; Versnel, "Thrice One," 93; Aristotle *Metaphysics* 1.5.986b21: Ξενοφάνης δὲ πρῶτος τούτων ἐνίσας (ὁ γὰρ Παρμενίδης τούτου λέγεται γενέσθαι μαθητὴς) οὐθὲν διεσαφήνισεν, οὐδὲ τῆς φύσεως τούτων οὐδετέρας ἔοικε θιγεῖν, ἀλλ' εἰς τὸν ὅλον οὐρανὸν ἀποβλέψας τὸ ἐν εἶναι φησι τὸν θεόν – *Xenophanes was the first of those who held the one/unity (for Parmenides is said to be his student), he did not make this clear, nor did he take hold of either of these likenesses of nature, but regarding the whole universe says that the one is god.*

This study of the cultural environment of Asia Minor and the development of a new religious situation has exposed limitations in the capacity of traditional pagan religion to provide for the spiritual needs of people. The gods of traditional religion were imaged anthropomorphically.⁴⁸ A monotheistic vision of god as conceived through Presocratics such as Xenophanes, served the spiritual and intellectual needs of people in a way that the traditional view of gods could not. The Homeric tradition of gods in human form provided limited spiritual depth.⁴⁹ Xenophanes critiqued the human practice of glorifying the gods, attacked Homer and Hesiod,⁵⁰ and drew together the teaching of the earlier Presocratics Anaximander and Anaximenes.⁵¹ The break with tradition instituted by Xenophanes against the simplistic anthropomorphic design of the Homeric and Hesiodic gods was long lasting, even as Xenophanes himself did not gain a significant following.⁵²

Leshner says Xenophanes' ideas on one god as moving everything with a thought (Fragment 25) but not moving physically in the process

⁴⁸ See description of traditional pagan religion in Chapter Five section 5.1.

⁴⁹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 307 says that the medium of verse such as Homer presented the gods may have given rise to anthropomorphism in the first place. With the innovations of the Presocratics: "There is nothing left of a Zeus who rains, according to the words of the poets and to popular belief, or who hurls the thunderbolt, nor of the sun god who by day drives his horses and chariot across the sky to return to his mother, wife, and children in the evening."

⁵⁰ Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 117. From Fragment 11: "It was Homer and Hesiod who attributed to the gods all sorts of things that are matters of reproach and censure among men (sic): theft, adultery, and mutual deceit."

⁵¹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 308.

⁵² Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 6, says that Socrates, Plato and Aristotle did not report Xenophanes as a significant thinker. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 309 considers the Homeric verse in which Xenophanes wrote contributed to his inability to gain adherents, because in the construction of the verse itself people interpreted his views on god as just another contest between poets and philosophers. The difficulty here is that we only have fragments of his verse, whereas earlier generations had access to wider sources, as the difference between opinions in his poems and the opinions of the testimonia reported of him attest. Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 7.

(Fragment 26) was original and enduring.⁵³ The immovable god is also unchanging, as Hippolytos intimates.⁵⁴

Plato around two centuries later articulated a sophisticated account of the construction of the universe based on an initial, perfect being, changeless and always existing. In the *Timaios* an ultimate being is always existent⁵⁵ (ὄντα) and is not subject to any force or condition imposed upon that which is subsequently created. This being is unmoving in the way of Xenophanes' one god (Fragment 26: αἰεὶ δ' ἐν ταύτῳ μίμνει κινούμενος οὐδέν). The ultimate entity required a cause (αἰτία), to bring other things into being.⁵⁶ Plato calls this cause a master worker, the δημιουργός, *demiurge*. The *demiurge* desired to use the eternal as the perfect image to create the universe. Whenever the *demiurge* keeps sight of that which is uniform and unchanging, the product created must be beautiful because of the model used.⁵⁷ In Plato 'beautiful' (καλός), 'most beautiful' (κάλλιστος) are used to convey the sense of perfection. The things that are always existent are products of the *demiurge* gazing into the perfect, changeless, eternal model.

The things that have been created from that which has already come into being are not perfect, because the model is not eternal. Concerning

⁵³ Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 109 says this is similar to Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, who moves an object by thought or desire, *Metaphysics* 1072A 20ff. Aristotle's description is much more complex and the full account is extant, unlike Xenophanes.

⁵⁴ Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 114 citing Hippolytos A31, A33, A36, that the unmoving god was ἔξω μεταβολῆς, *outside of change*. Supplementary information about Xenophanes as determined from ancient testimonia such as this help to build a broader view of his thinking. It is important to be aware of using limited evidence from a deductive basis, and the bias of Christian writers however.

⁵⁵ Plato *Timaios* 27D 5-6: τί τὸ ὄν αἰεὶ, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχον τί τὸ ὄν αἰεὶ, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχον, καὶ τί τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν αἰεὶ, ὄν δὲ οὐδέποτε; - *what is that which is always existent and has no becoming and what is that which is always becoming and has no existence?*

⁵⁶ Plato *Timaios* 28A 5-6: πᾶν δὲ αὖ τὸ γιγνόμενον ὑπ' αἰτίου τινὸς ἐξ ἀνάγκης – *furthermore everything which comes into being happens out of necessity by a cause.*

⁵⁷ Plato *Timaios* 28A 7-11: ὅτου μὲν οὖν ἂν ὁ δημιουργὸς πρὸς τὸ κατὰ ταῦτα ἔχον βλέπων αἰεὶ, τοιούτῳ τινὶ προσχωρῶμενος παραδείγματι, τὴν ἰδέαν καὶ δύναμιν αὐτοῦ ἀπεργάζηται, καλὸν ἐξ ἀνάγκης οὕτως ἀποτελεῖσθαι πᾶν – *so whenever the demiurge according to these same things holds her gaze toward the eternal, advancing with a model such as this, the form and its capacity is expressed perfectly, thus out of necessity is to be completed as beautiful.*

the construction of the universe, it is anticipated that the *demiurge* has fixed her gaze on that which has always been in existence.⁵⁸ The *demiurge* is the best of all causes.⁵⁹ Therefore the cosmos has come into existence based on a model that is not tangible or sensory but is apprehensible by reason and thought and is self-identical.⁶⁰

Plato's central doctrine of his theory of forms, or ideas, connected with his conception of god as one initial, eternal and perfect being. In this conception, the world inhabited by human beings was an inferior representation of something that existed in a perfect form, invisible and inaccessible to everything which has been made subsequently. From the *Timaios* we can deduce that the perfect images are those which have been created by the *demiurge* gazing into the model of the one, always existing, changeless being. These forms or ideas are those which can be ascertained by reason. The things experienced as tangible and sensory within the created world are those which have been modelled upon these forms, but which are separated from them.

Plato inherited Xenophanes' view of divine perfection and developed it. He, like Xenophanes, was however not consistent in his reference to the divine in the singular.⁶¹ It seems that what he conceived intellectually as one ultimate entity translated practically to other things. In the *Timaios* Plato has Socrates invite Timaios to invoke the gods before commencing his outline of the construction of the universe.⁶² In so doing Timaios says that anyone with any sense would call upon god (singular) before undertaking anything, great or small.

⁵⁸ Plato *Timaios* 29A 3-4: δῆλον ὡς πρὸς τὸ αἰδῖον ἔβλεπεν – *as it is evident she looks toward the eternal.*

⁵⁹ Plato *Timaios* 29A 6-7: ὁ ἄριστος τῶν αἰτίων – *the best of the causes.*

⁶⁰ Plato *Timaios* 28A 1-4: τὸ μὲν δὴ νοήσει μετὰ λόγου περιληπτὸν αἰεὶ κατὰ ταῦτα ὄν, τὸ δ' αὖ δόξῃ μετ' αἰσθήσεως ἀλόγου δοξαστὸν γιγνόμενον καὶ ἀπολλύμενον, ὅντως δὲ οὐδέποτε ὄν – *so that which she will perceive with reasoning is embraced as always existent, whilst that which she will have an opinion about with the senses is without reason becoming a matter of opinion and perishes, as it really is never existent.*

⁶¹ Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 98-9. Plato *Republic* 2: ὁ θεός 381B 4; θεοί 381D 1; οἱ θεοί 381E 8.

⁶² Plato *Timaios* 26B 9-11.

In the next line, he then refers to gods in the plural, with the same sense as he conveyed in the singular.⁶³

Occurrences of god/s in the singular or plural number is not in itself a means of assessing whether monotheism is intended.⁶⁴ Grammatical plurality can refer to singularity as well as multiplicity.⁶⁵ Naming god as one was not a matter of contest or upholding an orthodoxy.

Flexibility in ways of referring to god as one or in a multiple form was a feature of pagan monotheism which has made it difficult for modern thinkers to accept monotheism as an accurate designation for any form of pagan religion. This grammatical flexibility does not mean that monotheism may not still appropriately be applied to pagan expressions of acknowledging and worshipping god, which I attempt to address in this chapter.

Nonetheless the inconsistency in the naming and numbering of god cannot be overlooked entirely. It is one reason philosophy alone cannot be relied on to uphold monotheism.

6.4.1 The Greek philosophical idea of one god and traditional pagan religion

The traditional interpretation of pagan gods was respected even by philosophers who spoke about one ultimate god. The well-known attitude of Socrates to honouring the traditional gods, despite his

⁶³ Plato *Timaios* 27C 1-4: ἄλλ' ὃ Σώκρατες, τοῦτό γε δὴ πάντες ὅσοι καὶ κατὰ βραχὺ σωφροσύνης μετέχουσιν ἐπὶ παντὸς ὀρμῆ καὶ μικροῦ καὶ μεγάλου πράγματος θεὸν αἰεὶ που καλοῦσιν· – *But O Socrates, all whosever even have a small share of good sense always call upon god at the setting out of every action, whether great or small.* 27C 7: ἀνάγκη θεοῦς τε καὶ θεᾶς ἐπικαλουμένους – *calling upon out of necessity gods both female and male...* and; 27C 9: καὶ τὰ μὲν περὶ θεῶν ταύτη παρακεκλήσθω· – *having thus invoked the gods concerning these things.*

⁶⁴ This is the position of Versnel, “Thrice One,” 121, who says in characteristic tone: “So I suggest that we now take a deep breath and bravely prepare ourselves for the conclusion that *hoi theoi* is not always the same as *hoi theoi*, and for the even more terrifying discovery that sometimes *hoi theoi* may be the same as *ho theos*.”

⁶⁵ Versnel, “Thrice One,” 121.

intellectual theology of one god, is preserved in the Greek historian Xenophon who wrote in defence of Socrates against charges for impiety.⁶⁶ As an illustration of Socrates' commitment to the traditional gods, Xenophon provides a dialogue between Aristodemus and Socrates.⁶⁷ In this exchange Socrates condemned Aristodemus' lack of piety, with a view, Xenophon says, of ensuring the future piety, justice and esteem of those who had failed to honour the traditional gods.

We move back to Plato, who before embarking on his outline of the construction of the universe, has Socrates encourage Timaios to offer a prayer to the traditional gods (see note above).⁶⁸ And in the *Phaidros* Socrates concludes the dialogue with a prayer to Pan and the other gods,⁶⁹ saying that prayer to the gods of the place was appropriate.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.1.1 names the charges against Socrates: ἡ μὲν γὰρ γραφή κατ' αὐτοῦ τοιαύδε τις ἦν, ἀδικεῖ Σωκράτης οὓς μὲν ἡ πόλις νομίζει θεοὺς οὐ νομίζων ἕτερα δὲ καινὰ δαιμόνια εἰσφέρων, ἀδικεῖ δὲ καὶ τοὺς νέους διαφθείρων – *For the writing against him was like this, Socrates is doing wrong not believing in the gods which the city believes in, but was bringing in other new gods, and he also does wrong corrupting the youth.* In 1.1.2 Xenophon goes on to extol Socrates' piety: θύων τε γὰρ φανερός ἦν πολλάκις μὲν οἴκοι, πολλάκις δὲ ἐπὶ τῶν κοινῶν τῆς πόλεως βωμῶν, καὶ μαντικῇ χρώμενος οὐκ ἀφανῆς ἦν – *for he was also openly sacrificing all the time at home, as well as all the time upon the common altars of the city and he did not hide his consulting oracles.*

⁶⁷ Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.4.2: λέξω δὲ πρῶτον ἃ ποτε αὐτοῦ ἤκουσα περὶ τοῦ δαιμονίου διαλεγομένου πρὸς Ἀριστόδημον τὸν μικρὸν ἐπικαλούμενον. καταμαθὼν γὰρ αὐτὸν οὐτε θύοντα τοῖς θεοῖς οὐτε μαντικῇ χρώμενον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ποιούντων ταῦτα καταγελῶντα, – *but I will first say those things which I once heard concerning the deity itself while conversing with Aristodemus the Small. For observing him closely he neither sacrificed to the gods nor consulted an oracle but even jeered at those doing these things.* Then at 1.4.10 after being challenged by Socrates' description of an ultimate maker, Aristodemus says he doesn't despise the godhead but feels it is too great to need his service. Socrates says that the greater the power that does things to serve (ie., for the good of the created people), the greater honour is demanded.

⁶⁸ Plato *Timaios* 27B 9-11: σὸν οὖν ἔργον λέγειν ἄν, ὦ Τίμαιε, εἴη τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο, ὡς ἔοικεν, καλέσαντα κατὰ νόμον θεοῦς – *therefore Timaios, it is to be your task to speak next, as is fitting, when you have called upon the gods according to custom.*

⁶⁹ Plato *Phaidros* 279B 6-C 2: ὦ φίλε Πάν τε καὶ ἄλλοι ὅσοι τῆδε θεοί, δοίητέ μοι καλῶ γενέσθαι τᾶνδοθεν ἔξωθεν δὲ ὅσα ἔχω τοῖς ἐντὸς εἶναι μοι φίλια. Πλούσιον δὲ νομίζοιμι τὸν σοφόν τὸ δὲ χρυσοῦ πληθὸς εἴη μοι ὅσον μῆτε φέρειν μῆτε ἄγειν δύναιτο ἄλλος ἢ ὁ σώφρων – *O beloved Pan and also the other gods as many as are here, give to me the things within to become beautiful and the things from without so I may have inner well-being. May I consider the wise person wealthy and to me sufficient gold as much as a moderate person may be able to bear and maintain.*

⁷⁰ Plato *Phaidros* 279B 4: οὐκοῦν εὐξαμένῳ πρέπει τοῖσδε πορεύεσθαι; – *therefore is it not fitting to convey prayer to the gods of this place?*

Care must be exercised with regard to Plato's presentation of Socrates however, along with assumptions about his monotheistic attitudes toward god, or commitment to traditional religion. Plato intended to uphold Socrates as the ideal person who fitted in with his conception of the world and how society should behave. He is figured to serve Plato's purposes. It is not necessarily an accurate representation of the 'real' person of Socrates.

From these indications of the desire to uphold the gods of tradition, a sense of dependence on the gods may be discerned. From our context in a very different world, it may appear superstitious, despite the logical reasoning presented in the writing about god and how all things came to be.

Plato defends the role of the traditional gods of a city and he emphasised that people respect them. Punishment existed for those who rejected the gods.⁷¹ Therefore what certain philosophers conceived of at an intellectual level was not how they expected people to behave at a practical or ritual level. The actions of the characters in Plato's dialogues, and later in Aristotle, upheld such behaviour. It was even evident in Xenophanes two centuries before Plato. Xenophanes radically reconceived god, but he did not depart from cultic or mythical understandings of traditional gods, which, like Plato, he considered essential for the proper functioning of society.⁷²

This attitude becomes important as other expressions of one god are discovered in evidence presented in such forms as confession inscriptions. More than one god can be addressed ritually in the confessions texts, even as one god may be implied. Another example is devotion to the *angelos* of a certain god. As will be discussed below in the section under mediation, divine and semi-divine figures may

⁷¹ Plato *Laws* 10.907C-910D, on the laws to be put in place and the punishment for impiety.

⁷² Versnel, "Thrice One," 102.

represent the power, or the manifestation of a singular highest god. These are examples of religious activity which appears on the surface as polytheistic, but when further analysed may suggest monotheism. When assessing evidence of potential monotheism, the context of the occurrence must be carefully examined. Does it belong to the new religious situation? Is it part of a mainstream or minority group setting? These things will be further explored as this study develops.

Further philosophical development of the idea of one god continued beyond Plato and Aristotle and is found in the writings of middle Platonism and Neoplatonism. It is beyond the area of study here to investigate these. The examples above from Xenophanes and Plato simply point to a tendency in Greek philosophy toward understanding an ultimate god as one.

The occurrences of monotheistic expression in this very brief discussion of two philosophers show contradiction with the numbering of god/s, and what appears to be assertions of one god and then practical affirmation of honouring many gods. From this, valid critique of any claim for pagan monotheism based on philosophy alone may be made. It is necessary to provide evidence of practical monotheistic activity, alongside philosophical monotheism, to substantiate any claim for pagan monotheism within the cultural environment.

6.4.2 Summing up a philosophical monotheistic universe

In the construction of the universe developed by Plato, the world was created by the master worker, the *demiurge*. Plato, who built upon earlier philosophical foundations, and his successors, conceived of the perfect, unchanging and eternal entity. This was the god. The god had always been existent and remained entirely separated from the world. The *demiurge* gazed into the eternal and established creation. That which was created had no recourse to the perfect eternal entity

because of the separation of realms, the inferiority of the state of being created, and the subjection to limitations such as time, elements and capacity.

This construction necessarily entailed a hierarchical ordering in which the highest was the most superior and the lowest the most inferior. In the philosophical hierarchy, the highest was the eternal entity which remained in a perpetual state of separation from all that followed. Next was the *demiurge*, or the one which gazed into the eternal and in created the images of everything in their perfect form, good and beautiful. These images similarly remained separate from all that followed, existing in the realm of thought and reason. The material creation then emerged, and apart from the soul – which belonged to a higher level,⁷³ was accessible as a tangible and sensory reality.

In the hierarchical structure of the universe, divine and semi-divine figures operated, acting as mediators within the strata.⁷⁴ In the strata may be found the many gods of pagan religion. These were figures who, according to Versnel, occupied no “fixed category.”⁷⁵ Rather they were flexible in definition. At the assimilating edges of cultural groups, a distinct god such as the god of Judaism and Christianity may be viewed as belonging to the strata. In addition, were found those less distinct figures to be described in the following sections which I suggest are representative of pagan monotheism.

There were ancient interpretations of the construction of the universe which can be sourced from philosophical schools other than the platonic. One such alternative is noted in a Stoic physical interpretation of the universe, in which existence was predicated on

⁷³ Plato *Timaios* 34C ff.

⁷⁴ Belayche, “Religious Rhetoric,” 248 refers to the inaccessibility of the remote supreme divinity and that the hierarchy that resulted required mediatory figures to enable access by human beings. The processes of mediation will be discussed below.

⁷⁵ Versnel, “Thrice One,” 105.

corporality.⁷⁶ Whilst noting that the evidence of ancient Greek philosophers studied here is limited to one example from the Presocratic era and one from after, I accept in this study that one ultimate god was a common, even if not absolute, feature of Greek philosophy. It is beyond this study to elucidate further on the contribution of philosophical monotheism to ritual monotheistic practice.

The platonic vision of the universe provides a background to the diverse religious expressions present in the cultural landscape of Asia Minor, even if it is not the only way of understanding the universe. In this study, it is a model within which to set the figures who have a role in monotheism.

6.5 New ways of seeing god and gods

In traditional paganism, many gods were represented. These fulfilled various religious roles. Access to an ultimate god removed from the human world was not part of the view of traditional religion.

Philosophers such as Plato advised observation of the traditional gods to ensure the proper functioning of society. This was even when, as Plato describes in the *Timaios*, one god was intellectually conceived as mover of the universe.

However, as the religious situation changed in Asia Minor, the desires and ambitions of individuals began to influence attitudes toward god and gods. People began looking for other ways of approaching god/s

⁷⁶ In those aspects of Stoic philosophy in which nothing incorporeal exists, including god, the opposite of platonic idealism occurs. Some Stoic thought did acknowledge the incorporeal however – Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 10.218 D (translation in *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1: Translations and Commentary, A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley): “[Stoics] say that of somethings some are bodies, others incorporeals, and they list four species of incorporeals – sayable (lekton), void, place, and time.” This however, is set in the context where corporeality is “the hallmark of existence.”

than through the tradition, to be open to a more personal experience of the divine. Whilst the architectural impression of the cosmos remained unchanged, there was a change in the way people reported their experience of the gods.⁷⁷ This may be seen in the increase in inscriptional evidence of particularly western Asia Minor that refers to abstract entities. These entities include τὸ θεῖον, *theion*, the divinity, ἄγγελοι, *angels/angeloi*, and figures administering divine justice such as Ὅσιος καὶ Δίκαιος, *Hosios and Dikaios*, the Holy and Just.⁷⁸ These figures, in addition to the practices of public confession discussed in the previous chapter, were products of a new religious situation, a new way in which people searched for, experienced, and understood the divine.

From the religious activities associated with these designations, practical monotheism may be inferred in many instances. These practices began in the boundaries between cultural groups and within minority groups. Through the processes of assimilation as described in this study, these religious practices inevitably affected mainstream religion. Wider changes happened, such as in the way oracle centres functioned. These centres responded to a situation that was new, including a personal desire to know god and to communicate with god.⁷⁹

Within a new religious situation, well established philosophical understandings of god as one ultimate entity found practical expression in the cultural environment. This happened alongside the

⁷⁷ Belayche, “Religious Rhetoric,” 251 refers to shifts in religious language which point to a change in peoples’ experience of gods. These shifts are evidenced in the inscriptional record of abstract divine and semi-divine figures, which are discussed below.

⁷⁸ Belayche, “Religious Rhetoric,” 247 suggests the examples of divinities honoured on stones such as *angeloi*, *the theion* and *Hosios and Dikaios* provide case studies of individualisation. If so, this affirms these figures as representative of the new religious situation.

⁷⁹ Oracle centres as places for monotheistic expressions of god will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

regular practices of traditional polytheistic paganism in which most people continued to operate.⁸⁰

The evidence of activities which arose in the new religious situation indicates people did experience god differently. The transmission of the philosophical ideas about one remote god from the Presocratics onward did occur among 'ordinary' people. Through new religious practices people experienced the manifestations, the *δυνάμεις*, powers, of the highest god. These manifestations may not appear outwardly as monotheistic, yet further investigation can yield insights into a singular divine power behind the manifestations.

People experienced the powers of one high god in the rule of divine justice, through the practices of public confession, the devotion to local gods such as *Mēn*, and abstract divinities which included *Hosios* and *Dikaios*, the *angeloi* and the *theion*. Whilst not overtly monotheistic, these experiences nonetheless represented the effects of a remote, singular deity conceived intellectually and experienced personally as the author of all things. Therefore, other divine figures had a role in the expressions of pagan monotheism, a concept which does not align with modern understandings of monotheism.

Transmission of philosophical ideas of one god is unlikely to have been intentional. It occurred through ordinary processes of exchange of ideas and introduction of new practices. These things prospered in the changed conditions of a new religious situation. The cultural environment as established in this study provided the means for the changes which were sometimes expressed as monotheistic attitudes toward god.

⁸⁰ Belayche, "Religious Rhetoric," 260 concludes that expressions of divine power and intervention in the world, which may be seen in the evidence of inscriptions to abstract entities come from within a polytheistic system.

6.6 Divine justice, *angeloi* and the *theion* as representative of pagan monotheism

In Asia Minor a sense of awe and humility by human beings accompanied a trend toward monotheism in the cultural environment.⁸¹ Awe and humility were associated with the practices of public confession and in dedications honouring abstract entities.⁸² Awe and humility were part of the human experience of god. Revelations of divine presence and use of divine power have always provoked submissive responses in humans. In a new religious situation, the question about what might be different in human response to divine revelation needs to be asked. It is more likely that the human perception of divine power changed, rather than the fact of divine punishment and human awe.

People began to respond ritually to this one remote god and record their responses through the perception of its δυνάμεις, powers. The confession practices discussed in the last chapter were a way people recorded their experience of the powers of a high god.

The powers were also felt through the effects of divine justice and through the intervention of abstract divinities such as the *angeloi* and *theion*. These figures were honoured for their manifestation and representation of a higher power. They were not necessarily inferior to the known and named figures of the traditional pantheon. Their status did not need to be acknowledged by a definite name.

In this conception of a superior god, abstract divinities as Hosios and Dikaios may be described as projections of a higher divinity. They express the divinity as manifested in the world as a holy power bringing justice, as a highest god. I suggest that Hosios and Dikaios be seen as one being who is sometimes depicted under a figure of a rider

⁸¹ Kraabel, “Υψιστος,” 82-4 on the religious attitude of awe and humility.

⁸² Kraabel, “Υψιστος,” 82.

god, or a god whose manifestation of power they express, such as Mēn, Zeus, Helios or Apollo. The following dedication is an example:

A	Ἄγαθῇ τύχῃ Διομᾶς καὶ Εὐτύχη- ς λατύποι	<i>Diomas and Eutyches stone cutters to Good Fortune</i>
B	[Μ]ητρὶ θεῶν, Φοίβῳ τ' ὀσίῳ καὶ Μηνὶ δικαίῳ, ὀφθαλμῶ τε Δίκης δικε- οφροσύνης χάριν ἄνδρες Σακλεανοὶ σωτήρσι θεοῖς ὀσίοις ἀνέθηκαν ⁸³	<i>To the Mother of the gods, and to both holy Phoibos and just Mēn the Sakleanoi men set this up to the eye of the just character of Dikē and to the saving holy gods</i>

This decorated dedication on a marble stele from Phrygia comprises of two inscriptions. The bust of Zeus Bronton appears at the top of the stele. In the panel beneath is the figure of Helios with radiate head driving a quadriga. Another horse and Dionysos with thyrsos is visible above the text. The first inscription (A) is by the stone cutters to the god of good fortune. The second inscription (B) is to the Mother of the gods, to Phoibos, Mēn and other figures of divine justice. Here the qualities of holy and just (ὅσιος, δίκαιος) have been transferred to Phoibos and Mēn, rather than standing as gods themselves.

In this example, the intention of honouring a higher god is contained within the formulae and imagery of known gods. The role of the individual is highlighted in personal addresses to a named god, such as Mēn, Hosios and Dikaios.⁸⁴ In these type of dedications, the specific qualities being honoured were manifested by the named god, but the source of power was an ultimate high divinity.

⁸³ Riel, "Hosios kai Dikaios. Premiere Parte," 13-14 no. 25, 59 Plate 5, no. 25.

⁸⁴ Belayche, "Religious Rhetoric," 256.

An example of individual expression is seen in another dedication from the territory of Aizanoi to the indigenous gods of justice:

<p>[Ἐτ]οὺς σοέ Α... Νεικίτας Παρδ- αλᾶ Μηνὶ θεῶ εὐχίην. Ὅσίῳ κὲ Δικέῳ ἢ Ἄλιανῶν κα- τοικία. Σῶζε τὴν κατοικίαν⁸⁵</p>	<p><i>In the first month of the year Neiketas Pardala made a prayer to the god Mēn. The village of Alianoi to Hosios and Dikaios. Save the village.</i></p>
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Here within the same inscription, the personal dedication is set in the context of the community. The authority of Mēn is invoked by Neiketas, whilst the village called on the intervention of the gods of justice, Hosios and Dikaios. The god Mēn was being honoured for a quality of delivering divine justice.⁸⁶ In addition to Mēn, the impersonally named divinities Hosios and Dikaios, also being honoured in the hope that they deliver justice and save the village, pointed toward the recognition of one superior creating god such as might be discerned from a platonic interpretation of the universe.

The figures described epigraphically as Hosios and Dikaios could function as attributive qualities of known gods,⁸⁷ as well as impersonally named agents of divine justice. These, in addition to the abstractions *angeloi* and *theion*, occupied the structure of the universe, as has been described. They were functionaries who performed a role, even as they were not confined to any one role. They were the result of new ways of seeing god and gods, new experiences of divine activity. The abstract entities appeared in the same, or similar environmental

⁸⁵ Riel, "Hosios kai Dikaios. Premiere Parte," 37 no. 81.

⁸⁶ For example, Hasan Malay, "A Praise on Mēn Artemidorou Axiottenos," *EA* 26 (2003): 13-18. Here the qualities of justice and holiness are honoured through praise of Mēn Artemidorou: μέγα σοι τὸ ὄσιον, μέγα σοι τὸ δίκαιον – *to you great the holiness, to you great the justice.*

⁸⁷ As in the inscription above, Riel, "Hosios kai Dikaios. Premiere Parte," 13-14 no. 25, where ὄσιος, δίκαιος are applied as attributive qualities to Phoibos and Mēn.

contexts in Asia Minor. The figures associated with the monotheistic tendencies discussed, including Mēn, Zeus, Mētēr figures, Apollo/Helios, Hosios and Dikaios, who administered divine justice, along with the *theion* and *angeloi*, were interrelated in dedications and iconographically incorporated into the visual landscape of divine honouring. The interrelatedness of these figures means they are to be studied together, within that same context.

These distinct religious expressions were the result of people's perception of a superior power operating in the universe. They may be viewed as projections of a higher divinity, agents of its power manifesting in the world. From the study of these, I categorise them as representations of pagan monotheism.

As people began to view god and gods differently out of a religious situation which was changing, there arose new ways of describing the divine experience. The increasing role of individuals influenced this. The evidence which represents devotion to the abstract figures reflects a desire for a personal relationship with god. Abstract naming of gods evident in epigraphy enabled ordinary people to express their acknowledgement of divine action around them in a new way. These figures had a similar role to the traditional gods. They could project any god whose status and qualities they shared.⁸⁸ They expressed a means of divine intervention.⁸⁹

There is evidence naming *angeloi* and *theion* and abstract agents of justice like Hosios and Dikaios from before the period studied here.⁹⁰ However their use reached a peak in the second and third centuries. They represented a rhetorical means of naming divine power which was new. They were part of the new religious situation and were

⁸⁸ Belayche, "Religious Rhetoric," 260.

⁸⁹ This idea fits with Jesus Christ as a mediator without subordination.

⁹⁰ Especially referring to *theion*, Versnel, "Thrice One," 113, 125 suggests usage was evident in literature. Inscriptional use became more prominent for all these abstract figures in the first three imperial centuries.

associated with developments toward monotheism. Evidence of these figures expressed a change in religious language which might indicate change in the theological representation of the gods, rather than the traditional hierarchical representation.⁹¹ This means a shift in orientation of the gods from a traditional view established through a usual reconstruction of a platonic universe.

This idea provides scope to rethink the traditional model of a hierarchy as being vertical in structure with the highest being the most superior. A theological reinterpretation of hierarchy enables the possibility of a horizontal structure in which figures inhabiting it are not made lesser by any function they perform in a certain context. A sideways view also makes room for the individual person in the universe as an active agent rather than submissive respondent. A flat hierarchy is a possible representation of a universe in which pagan monotheism developed.

Angeloi have a long tradition of religious association in Asia Minor and elsewhere throughout the ancient world.⁹² Their roles in Judaeo-Christian religious tradition taken up by more modern history of religions scholarship has impacted on how later generations of people have viewed them, whether they appear in a Judaeo-Christian or a pagan context.⁹³ This thinking does not necessarily reflect the wider role of *angeloi* in the cultural environment of Asia Minor. As ‘angels’ have had such a major role in the religious tradition inherited by the western world their study must always be carefully measured against the deductive use of data and tests for anachronism. The study of *angeloi* is thus complicated with anachronistic presumptions.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Belayche, “*Angeloi*,” 46-7.

⁹² Belayche, “*Angeloi*,” 48 suggests that *angeloi* were less prominent in Greek mythology and religious tradition than in Near Eastern culture, whether polytheistic or monotheistic.

⁹³ Belayche, “*Angeloi*,” 45.

⁹⁴ Sheppard, “Pagan Cults of Angels,” and F. Sokolowski, “Sur le Culte d’Angelos dans le Paganisme Grec et Romain,” *HTR* 53/4 (1960): 225-9, take traditional

Cultic references in Asia Minor to *angeloi* in the first three imperial centuries occur within pagan and Jewish contexts. They are infrequent,⁹⁵ but significant. Occurrences naming *angeloi* are found in both pagan and Jewish context. Pagan uses of *angeloi* were not necessarily influenced by Judaism in this era.⁹⁶ The case study given below of *angeloi* evidence in Stratonikeia attests to this. Some scholars have tried to emphasise the connection of evidence of *angeloi* with Judaism.⁹⁷ Jewish tradition and epigraphical evidence does not necessarily support this.⁹⁸ Sheppard does not give a religious meaning of *angeloi* for pagans.⁹⁹ Neither does Rangar Cline try to make a religious connection in his study of the phenomenon of *angeloi* invocation and devotion across the Mediterranean.¹⁰⁰ I take the position that references to *angeloi* were given in a cultic context. For pagans, they represented a way of interpreting the divine-human relationship. They offered a means of mediation to a high god and they manifested the powers of this high god. In this study, I group pagan references to *angeloi* with the practices associated with monotheism.

Theion is another abstraction, a neuter designation, which appears to reflect an attitude toward a god that differed from traditional pagan interpretations.¹⁰¹ In a confession inscription from Maionia the report of Babou's punishment for failing to report for duty as a priest names the punishing god simply as τὸ θεῖον, *the divinity*:

positions in their study of *angeloi*. This influences their view of the *angeloi* in pagan religious roles.

⁹⁵ Belayche, "*Angeloi*," 49.

⁹⁶ Belayche, "*Angeloi*," 50.

⁹⁷ Mitchell, *Anatolia* 2, 46; Sheppard, "Pagan Cults of Angels," 77.

⁹⁸ For example, *TJ Berakoth* 9.1.13a. (People should not call upon the archangels but on God who will answer.)

⁹⁹ Shepard, "Pagan Cults of Angels," 77.

¹⁰⁰ Cline, *Ancient Angels*. Cline's study is contained between the mid second to the mid fifth centuries CE and so takes in evidence which is outside of the parameters of this thesis.

¹⁰¹ τὸ θεῖον to express the divine was not a new invention in the cultural environment. It had been in use for centuries. In literature, it was used to reflect superior power – Versnel, "Thrice One," 113, 125. What was new in Asia Minor in the early imperial period was its increase in use and significant new epigraphical use.

Ἐπιζ –	<i>Having been</i>
νηθεῖσα ἰέρεια ὑπὸ	<i>sought after by the divinity</i>
τοῦ θείου κὲ μὴ ὑπο –	<i>to be a priest and not</i>
κρεινομένη, πάλιν	<i>responding, again</i>
ἐπιζη<τη>θεῖσα ὑπὸ	<i>being sought after by</i>
τοῦ θείου, ¹⁰²	<i>the divinity,</i>

The emphasis in this text is on the awesome fact of Babou's punishment and that god was so involved in Babou's personal circumstances as to enact the torture.¹⁰³ Her experience was a physical reality, even though the divinity existed in a separated and superior realm. The *theion* is not a named god, even if a known god is implied in the address.¹⁰⁴ It is the fact of divine intervention and a new attitude toward god and a new way of seeing god that is reflected ritually in the inscription. Babou confesses her failure and acknowledges the power of god in so doing.

The neutral *theion* contains the idea of the divine rather than the supremacy of a highest divinity itself.¹⁰⁵ This would fit the context of

¹⁰² CIG 4142.4-9.

¹⁰³ CIG 4142.9-13: μετὰ πολ – | λῆς ἀνάγκης κὲ βασά – | νων ἔκυτο <ύ>πόδειγμα | τῶν ἄλλων ἰς τὸν τό | πον – *after great force and inquiry by torture she lay as a token of others in this place.*

¹⁰⁴ Riçl, "A Forgotten Confession Inscription," 40 suggests the divinity referred to in Babou's dedication is likely to be Hosios and Dikaïos, who elsewhere is referred to as τὸ θεῖον – Riçl, "Hosios kai Dikaïos. Premiere Parte," 5, no. 6: Θεῖω Ὀσίω καὶ Δικαίω | Γ(άιος) Ἰ(ούλιος) Ἀνεΐκτητος εὐχὴν, | προνοήσαντος Ἀμ- | φιλόχου Β', ἱερέος – *Gaios Ioulios Aneiketos made a prayer to the Divinity Hosios and Dikaïos, having provided Amphilochos the second (or, son of Amphilochos), priest; and 6, no. 8: Θεῖω Ὀσίω καὶ Δικαίω | Ἑρμῆς Ἡφαιστίωνος | καὶ Μελτίνῃ Β', ἡ γυνὴ αὐ- | τοῦ, ὑπὲρ Φιλιππικοῦ | τοῦ υἱοῦ εὐχὴν. Ἔτους σ- | νζ', μην(ὸς) Ἀπελλαίου η' – *Hermes Hephaistianos and Meltine (the second, or daughter of Meltine), his wife, made a prayer to the Divinity Hosios and Dikaïos on behalf of Philippikos his son. In the year σνζ in the month of Apellaïos; SEG 41.1187 (PH273093): Καρικὸς Δι- | ονυσίου ὑ- | πὲρ ἑαυτοῦ | κὲ τῶν ἰδίων | πάντων Ὀσί- | ω κὲ Δικέω θίω | εὐχὴν – *Karikos son of Dionysios made a prayer on behalf of himself and all his family to the divinity Hosios and Dikaïos.* Cults of the indigenous Hosios and Dikaïos are well established through Phrygia. They provide examples of the role of the gods in local justice and in the significant role of minority cultural groups. In addition to Hosios and Dikaïos, Riçl, "A Forgotten Confession Inscription," 41 suggests the figure intended by the designation *theion* could be a local Helios, Apollo or Zeus.**

¹⁰⁵ Belayche, "Angeloï," 47 n. 165 refers to TAMV 1.609 from Lydia: Θεῶ θεῖω – *to the divine god.* This reference clearly was intended to enhance the namelessness of the figure honoured.

Babou's situation. The name of the god is not important. It is divine action that is being honoured in the role of enacting justice. The personification of a highest divinity is found in references to Theos Hypsistos.¹⁰⁶

The ritual responses of individuals to these abstract figures in confession or honorific texts are personal, even as the naming is impersonal. It is interesting that in an era when the role of the individual is becoming more prominent, divinities with abstract, impersonal names appear. It would seem more natural from our position outside of the cultural context to ascribe personal names in an individual relationship.

Belayche suggests that the abstract, impersonal *theion*, *angeloi* and certain agents of divine justice represent a means of intervention of divine powers, not subordinate, but expressive of full divinity.¹⁰⁷ She further suggests that the epigraphic occurrences of *angeloi* and *theion* display a votive, or contractual, relationship with the gods.¹⁰⁸ She views the votive relationship as a marker for communication with the gods in Greek and Roman pagan tradition. Belayche's position on the pagan occurrences of *angeloi* and *theion* is that they belong to the spectrum of traditional Graeco-Roman religion, even if the conceptions of the divinity were new or different.

I suggest that they represent a new development in the religious situation toward monotheism, that they were a departure from traditional religion. The *angeloi* and *theion*, in addition to the local gods of justice honoured in the confession texts, are largely found among indigenous groups. This means they came out of a minority group setting. The research contained in this thesis suggests that the cultural environment which supported the new religious situation

¹⁰⁶ Cultic references to Theos Hypsistos will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

¹⁰⁷ Belayche, "Religious Rhetoric," 259-60.

¹⁰⁸ Belayche, "*Angeloi*," 46.

allowed space for minority group religious expression. Pagan monotheism happened in these minority spaces, which were opened by processes of assimilation.

Belyache's position on traditional pagan religious devotion as behind evidence of *angeloi* and *theion* is supported by the fact that traditional pagan polytheism continued and largely made up the mainstream. However, the fact that the weight of evidence discussed here is found among mostly indigenous minority groups indicates development away from traditional religion toward a new understand of god, and new ways of accessing god.

6.7 The question of mediation

Within a pagan monotheistic context, communication between divine and human was achieved through the processes of mediation. A hierarchical construction of the universe with separated realms, as established in the Platonic view, required processes of mediation to enable communication through the strata. Even within polytheism not all gods were equal, not all occupied the same space in the hierarchy. In the hierarchy of Olympian gods in the traditional Greek pantheon Zeus was acknowledged as the greatest of the gods. From a pagan monotheistic view, a supreme god was remote from the hierarchy and from the created world. Communication between realms therefore required other figures to be involved.

In the subject of mediation between human and divine, testing through awareness of deductional versus inductional use of data is required. Have processes of divine communication with the human world been assumed to require mediators with fixed roles? Particularly do those mediators which are fixed in our modern imaginations as 'angels' and 'demons' fill that role too easily? If a common understanding of

hierarchy is vertical, does this mean that mediators are inferior to the figure from whom they convey messages?¹⁰⁹

Mediation between realms was experienced differently in a pagan religious context and in a Judaeo-Christian context, even when monotheism can be implied in both. In the Jewish and Christian traditions, it was possible to talk directly to god,¹¹⁰ even if that god existed in a realm separate from the sensory world and might have seemed increasingly remote. Peter Hayman suggests that the pressure to follow a strict monotheistic way of life in the postexilic era led to the Jewish god becoming so transcendentalised that Jews increasingly felt the inaccessibility of god.¹¹¹ This supports my idea that a common experience of the divine was apprehended between different religious groups. When pagans sought god, it was frequently via oracle facilitation, or through confessional practices, enforcing the sense of separation from an ultimate divine. Even though in a new religious situation people may have been seeking a personal relationship with god, the ritual practices studied here suggest people understood the realm between human and divine to be separate.

The Judaeo-Christian meaning of mediator to supreme deity has prevailed in the modern interpretation of *angeloi*. Therefore ‘messenger’ is a common meaning ascribed to the word *angelos*. It is in fact the lexicon meaning given for ὁ ἄγγελος, ἡ ἄγγελη.¹¹²

Interpretation of *angeloi* and other abstractions such as the *theion* has been circumscribed because of messenger associations.

¹⁰⁹ Belayche, “*Angeloī*,” challenges any such assumptions. Epigraphical evidence of *angeloi*, *theion* and agents of divine justice do not support notions of inferiority. Cline, 4, on the other hand, presents *angeloi* as lesser.

¹¹⁰ The Book of Psalms in the Old Testament is an example of the language of prayer offered directly to god. Psalms lay the human experience open before god, showing that Jews and Christians who took up these same traditions believed god would hear and understand, despite god’s sovereignty.

¹¹¹ Hayman, “Monotheism – A Misused Word,” 1.

¹¹² *LSJ*: a messenger, envoy; generally, one that announces; a divine messenger, an angel, N. T.

Using a deductive method, the traditional translation of *angeloi* as angels, messengers, has been transferred back to Greek and Roman religion, especially by scholars of the twentieth century. It has been used to support the idea that any religious change in which *angeloi* featured facilitated the way for Christianity to become dominant.¹¹³ Such translation does not accommodate either cultural nuances or biblical background.¹¹⁴ *Angeloi* in a pagan context may be entirely unrelated to biblical references.

The meaning of ‘messenger’ or ‘messenger of god/s’ does not encompass the complexity of the roles of *angeloi* in the pagan cultural context. This meaning can of course apply, and is reinforced in the classical imagery of Hermes towards Zeus.¹¹⁵ At a sanctuary of Zeus Panamaros in Stratonikeia of Karia the *angelos* of Zeus is attested from the point of Hermes – Διὸς ἄγγελος.¹¹⁶ Yet as Belayche says, in this context Hermes is not just a supernatural assistant.¹¹⁷ He has the stature of a god and is honoured with divine status for his communication function. ‘Messenger’ is therefore not a subordinate function of mediation and transfer. It is a full representation of divine power.

Hermes was not the only god who functioned as messenger. F. Sokolowski in 1960 identified Hekate as a *angelos* between worlds who also functioned as a god of vengeance and justice.¹¹⁸ Sokolowski connected Hekate with the *angelos* references at Stratonikeia.

¹¹³ Belayche, “*Angeloi*,” 49 note 179 refers to the work of Franz Cumont, *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain* (Paris: P. Guethner, 1906 [1929⁴]) as an example of influential trends in scholarship regarding the role and influence of angels on the history of religions.

¹¹⁴ Belayche, “*Angeloi*,” 49.

¹¹⁵ *Odyssey* 5.29. Belayche, “*Angeloi*,” 47. See also Belayche, “Religious Rhetoric,” 251 who cites an example from Greg H. R. Horsley, *The Greek and Latin Inscriptions in the Burdur Archaeological Museum*, Regional Epigraphic Catalogues of Asia Minor 5 (London: British Institute of Ankara, 2007): no. 108, II.24-7: Ἑρμῆν ἀπανγγέλλοντα [β]ρ[ο]ντοῖσι ὅσσα Ζεὺς φρονέει ἠδὲ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι – *Hermes who announces to mortals as much of the thinking of Zeus and the other immortal gods.*

¹¹⁶ *IStr.* 103 – *angelos* of Zeus.

¹¹⁷ Belayche, “*Angeloi*,” 52.

¹¹⁸ Sokolowski, “Sur le Culte d’Angelos,” 228.

Sheppard has strongly disagreed with this connection, preferring the influence of Judaism on the Stratonikeia *angelos*.¹¹⁹

The *angelos* of Mēn is reported acting as messenger in inscriptional evidence of the confession texts from the imperial period. In these texts, the *angelos* of Mēn appears as messenger of a master god. Direct access for the penitent to Mēn, who is the subject of the confession, is not implied in the texts. This highlights the separation of realms and the necessity of some form of mediation. In the confessional corpus communication to the wrongdoer via an *angelos* only occurs twice, indicating it was not the usual means of communication in these contexts.¹²⁰ Given the limitation of *angeloi* evidence, it is important to rely inductively, and not presume *angeloi* were widespread in cult.

I agree here with Belayche that *angeloi* as explicit mediators were not a usual representation in pagan dedications.¹²¹ If the messenger function of *angeloi* is to accommodate the experience depicted in the epigraphical evidence of Asia Minor, then it seems all divine beings had the capacity to be mediators, and might be honoured as such, bringing news from the gods whom they represented,¹²² without any sense of inferiority.

Angeloi have an active function in pagan religion. Belayche gives a meaning of an *angelos* as a god in action.¹²³ This very appropriate meaning expands on the function of *angeloi* in religious experience, builds on the messenger role and removes any inferiority status.

¹¹⁹ Sheppard, "Pagan Cults of Angels," 79-80.

¹²⁰ Petzl, *Beichtinschriften*, 48, no. 38.5-7: καθὼς ἡμῖν ἐδηλώθη ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ θεοῦ Μηνὸς Πετραεῖτου Ἀξετηνοῦ – *just as it was manifested by the angelos of Mēn Petraeitōs Axetēnos*; and, 3, no. 3.8-11: ὁ θεὸς οὖν ἐκέλευσε δι' ἀγγέλου πραθῆναι τὸ εἰμάτιν καὶ στηλλογραφήσαι τὰς δυνάμεις – *therefore the god commanded through an angelos that the garment be obtained and the powers inscribed on a stele*.

¹²¹ Belayche, "Angeloi," 56.

¹²² Belayche, "Religious Rhetoric," 251-2.

¹²³ Belayche, "Religious Rhetoric," 254.

Angelos as god in action invests these figures with the power of full divinity.

In the cultural environment of Asia Minor, the designation *angeloi* was a way of naming divinity and naming the action of the divine from the side of human experience. *Angelos* as god in action means much more than the obedient act of messenger mediation, as the inheritance of Judaeo-Christian tradition has bequeathed. It means that any god can have an *angelos* and that any god can function as an *angelos*. Even though some texts refer to the *angelos* of say Zeus, Mēn or Helios/Apollo,¹²⁴ perhaps implying that these *angeloi* only served in these roles, these references need to be placed within a larger context in which such figures play a non-mediatory role.¹²⁵ The *angelos* honoured at Stratonikeia is found in the context of thanksgiving dedication, as the object of exaltation, as well as in a mediatorial role.¹²⁶

Therefore, an *angelos* function is not the only aspect of a god. If any god can function as *angelos*, then it clarifies the abstract, impersonality of the naming, because *angelos* relates to the function itself rather than the whole being of the god. *Angelos* with the meaning of a god in action removes connotations of inferiority and calls into question the traditional vertical interpretation of a hierarchy in which the angels are lower than the gods.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ For example, Riçl, “A Forgotten Confession Inscription,” 40 note 45; Riçl, “Hosios kai Dikaios. Second Parte, 95 no. 1: [θε]οῦ Ἀπόλλωνος και[ι] | [τῶν] ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ Ὁσίῳ | [κὲ] Δικέῳ – of the god Apollo and his *angeloi* to Hosios and Dikaios.

¹²⁵ Belayche, “*Angeloi*,” 45.

¹²⁶ See section below on Stratonikeia. According to Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 60, it was through the messenger function alone that the *angelos* at Stratonikeia was honoured.

¹²⁷ Some of this hierarchical sense is reinforced in the biblical tradition which has informed much modern scholarship – Psalm 8.4-5: ‘What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour.’ (Translation *New Revised Standard Version*). A textual variant at 8.5 for the Hebrew *elohim* has been interpreted as ‘divine beings’ or ‘angels.’ Hebrews 2.6-7: Τί ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ὅτι μμνήσκῃ αὐτοῦ, ἢ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ὅτι ἐπισκέπη αὐτόν; ἠλάττωσας αὐτόν βραχύ τι παρ’ ἀγγέλους, δόξη καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας αὐτόν – *what is a human being that you*

An *angelos* must be related to a deity it serves to function as messenger. This connection may not be evident with the more obscure messenger identifications that occur in relation to the *theion*,¹²⁸ or when a deity like Zeus is invested with an epithet such as *hypsistos*.¹²⁹ Evidence for these combinations of deity occur at Stratonikeia and will be discussed below.

6.8 The case for pagan monotheism in Stratonikeia

Most of the evidence for *angeloi* in Asia Minor is epigraphical and there is a concentration around Stratonikeia.¹³⁰ This geographical concentration is both a limitation in usefulness as well as being evidence of a probable cult centre of *angeloi*. In Stratonikeia *angeloi*, as well as the impersonal presences of *theion* and combinations of *hypsistos*, are found.

Stratonikeia was a significant town in the interior region of Karia, south of the Marsyas River. (See Map 1) From Stratonikeia there are attested over 1500 inscriptions.¹³¹ Nineteen inscriptions are related to abstractly named divinities.¹³² Mostly these may be dated from the second to the third centuries CE.¹³³ They are short inscriptions and the majority are in combination with Zeus Hypsistos. I suggest that the pairing of Zeus with Hypsistos (most high, highest), which is an

remember him, or a son of a human being that you take care of him? You made him lower for some small while than angeloi, glorified and honoured having crowned him.
¹²⁸ For example, McCabe 45 = *IStr.* 1119 from Stratonikeia: θεῖω ἄγγε - | λικῶ εὐχα | ριστοῦμεν | ὑπὲρ σωτη | ρίας - *to the angelos-like divinity we give thanks on behalf of (our) salvation.*

¹²⁹ For example, McCabe 56 = *IStr.* 1117 from Stratonikeia: Διὶ ὑψίστῳ | καὶ θεῖω ἄγγε - | γέλω Νέων | καὶ Εὐφροσύνῃ - | νη ὑπὲρ τῶν | ἰδίων - *To Zeus most high and the divine angelos, Neon and Euphrosunē (make this) on behalf of their own household.*

¹³⁰ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 57, says that the largest single group of pagan dedications to *angeloi* is found at Stratonikeia.

¹³¹ Belayche, “*Angeloi*,” 57 n. 228.

¹³² McCabe 45-58 (accessed through PHI database, Stratonikeia). Also, see E.

Varinlioglu, “Inscripfen von Stratonikeia in Karien,” *EA* 12 (1988): 84-88 nos. 6-11.

¹³³ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 58.

abstract epithet in itself,¹³⁴ be interpreted as a way people connected abstract names with a known deity. This may be a mainstream religious influence in a minority cultic setting. There was a major sanctuary of Zeus Panamaros at Stratonikeia, meaning Zeus was already a popular deity there.

Cline suggests that there was a local cult of Zeus and his *angelos* at Stratonikeia.¹³⁵ The geographical limitation of the Stratonikeia setting is probably too narrow a context for the cluster of Zeus Hypsistos with the *angelos* epithet to be regarded as evidence for a cult of Zeus and his *angelos*. The setting of *angelos* with Zeus Hypsistos is also in relationship to *theion*, and the status of *theion* in the Stratonikeia corpus is more than just an attributive to the *angelos*.¹³⁶ The *theion* also appears as an object of devotion alongside Zeus Hypsistos:

[Δ]εὶ Ὑψί –	<i>To Zeus Hypsistos</i>
[σ]τω καὶ θε[εῖ] –	<i>and the good</i>
ω ἀγαθῶ	<i>divinity</i>
[Ἰ]σοκράτης ¹³⁷	<i>by Isokrates.</i>

Cline goes on to say that the companion *angelos* in the Zeus Hypsistos inscriptions is the same entity that appears in other inscriptions as *theos*.¹³⁸ I agree that there was a cult of Zeus Hypsistos at Stratonikeia, but suggest that it appeared in relationship to the abstract *angelos* and the similarly abstract *theion* (not *theos*). The cult as such was expressed through the religious language of a new way of

¹³⁴ Designations of *hypsistos* as evidence of pagan monotheism will be discussed fully in Chapter Seven.

¹³⁵ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 57.

¹³⁶ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 57 equates *theion* with *theos* and says there are five dedications to Zeus Hypsistos and “a second divinity identified only as a ‘theos.’” I have only identified one dedication to *theos* (McCabe 47 = *IStr.* 1121). The rest are the *theion*, which Belayche has described as the idea of the divine, rather than divinity itself. Belayche, “*Angeloι*,” 47.

¹³⁷ McCabe 55 = *IStr.* 1114. The καὶ here seems to indicate two objects of devotion.

¹³⁸ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 57.

thinking about god. I suggest that it was a monotheistic religious expression.

The Zeus Hypsistos combinations at Stratonikeia include Zeus Hypsistos and *angelos*,¹³⁹ Zeus Hypsistos and *theion*,¹⁴⁰ Zeus Hypsistos and *theion* with adjectival qualifiers,¹⁴¹ Zeus Hypsistos and *theion* and *angelos*.¹⁴² There have also been found dedications to *theion* in combination with *angelos*,¹⁴³ and *hypsistos* (without Zeus)¹⁴⁴ and *theos* alone.¹⁴⁵ The one inscription from Stratonikeia to *theos* (θεός), god, only, is a dedication without any qualifying adjective. Again, this impersonal naming reflects the tendency in this place towards abstraction of divinity, which as discussed in this chapter, is a marker of pagan monotheism.

From the gymnasium in Stratonikeia has been found a set of *angelos* dedications inscribed on altars. This indicates that the gymnasium itself was a cult site for *angelos* followers.¹⁴⁶ The inscriptions from that site refer to the impersonalised deities here described, which I suggest are evidence of a new trend in the way people were defining god. The abstract *angelos* or the *theion* have no apparent connection with an individualised god. They represent a movement away from traditional religion and point toward a high god removed from the world. Their epigraphical relationship to Zeus is in the context of *hypsistos*, the

¹³⁹ McCabe 50 = *IStr.* 1118 – Διὶ Ὑψίστῳ καὶ Ἀγαθῶ Ἀγγέλῳ – to Zeus Hypsistos and the Good Angelos.

¹⁴⁰ McCabe 51 = *IStr.* 814: [Δ]ιὶ Ὑψίστῳ καὶ θείῳ – to Zeus Hypsistos and the divinity; Also, McCabe 52, 54, 54*5, 54*7, 55, 58.

¹⁴¹ McCabe 53 = *IStr.* 1111: [Δι]ῖ [Ὑψίστῳ καὶ] [θ]είῳ μεγάλ[ῳ] – to Zeus Hypsistos and the great divinity; McCabe 57 = *IStr.* 1115: Διὶ Ὑψίστῳ καὶ θίῳ βασιλικῶ – to Zeus Hypsistos and the royal divinity.

¹⁴² McCabe 56 = *IStr.* 1117: Διὶ Ὑψίστῳ καὶ θείῳ ἀγγέλῳ – to Zeus Hypsistos and the divine angelos; McCabe 56*5 – οὐρανίος.

¹⁴³ McCabe 45, 46 = *IStr.* 1119, 1120: θείῳ ἀγγελικῶ – to the angelos-like divinity.

¹⁴⁴ McCabe 47*5 = *IStr.* 1113: θεῶ ὕψιστῳ [καὶ τῷ θεῶ] – to Theos Hypsistos and the divinity.

¹⁴⁵ McCabe 47 = *IStr.* 1121: [τ]ῶ θεῶ | [Α]ὐρ(ήλιος) Ζήνων | <AP> | χαριστή | ριον – Aurelios Zenon (made) a thank offering to god.

¹⁴⁶ Belayche, “*Angeloï*,” 57.

‘most high’ qualification which as I have said, is an impersonalised designation.

The *angelos* at Stratonikeia always appears in the singular.¹⁴⁷ This distinguishes it from Jewish dedications and certain other pagan texts. Qualities such as ἀγαθός, good, or βασιλικός, royal, or οὐράνιος, celestial, define the Stratonikeia *angelos*.¹⁴⁸ The divinity, *theion*, is similarly qualified. They are expressions of exaltation. Belayche says these qualities, and the others referred to in the Stratonikeia *angelos* inscriptions, are part of the rhetoric of divine exaltation in Anatolia.¹⁴⁹ Similar ways of exalting the gods may be noted in the confession texts of Lydia and Phrygia. Exaltation of the gods was an expected ritual outcome following divine manifestation and intervention.

Sheppard found in his study that evidence of *angeloi* at Stratonikeia referred to pagan use of the term to describe a certain type of supernatural being. He says that ‘*angeloi*’ was a term borrowed from Hellenistic Judaism without the understanding of its monotheistic background.¹⁵⁰ He assumes that pagan borrowing of this and other Jewish religious terms was uninformed.¹⁵¹ His position suggests that pagan use of *angeloi* must be dependent on a Jewish precedent. I do not think this is the case, and Cline’s study would also support otherwise.¹⁵²

Sheppard also questions if the texts reflected Christian language,¹⁵³ or if it was the literature of Philo, and Christian authors informed by

¹⁴⁷ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 58.

¹⁴⁸ See references above, McCabe 50, 56*5, 57.

¹⁴⁹ Belayche, “*Angeloi*,” 58.

¹⁵⁰ Sheppard, “Pagan Cults of Angels,” 77.

¹⁵¹ Sheppard, “Pagan Cults of Angels,” 87. Sheppard cites an inscription from Apameia-Myrleia to support his assumption that pagans were misinformed: φιλαγαθήσασαν ἐν τῇ τοῦ Δίος συναγωγῇ – *for her (priest’s) love of good service in the synagogue of Zeus*. *BCH* 23 (1899) 593.

¹⁵² Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 49-51.

¹⁵³ Sheppard, “Pagan Cults of Angels,” 85 – less likely he thinks, because the texts lack “Christian colouring” (whatever that means!).

Philo, which influenced the appearance of the Stratonikeia texts.¹⁵⁴ Sheppard's position is a traditional Judaeo-Christian interpretation of angels and does not fit with the textual evidence he presents. The framework of cultural assimilation also indicates that pagans and Jews took up religious formulae and practices from each other. This has been shown in the case study of Jews living in Akmonia and in Miletos.¹⁵⁵ Different cultural groups making use of formulae and practices from other traditions conforms with processes of assimilation and does not mean people doing them are uninformed. They may indeed have borrowed the terminology and practices, but adapted them to a new situation.

Although Sheppard's use of evidence is deductive, his study is nonetheless useful in bringing together significant textual references to *angeloi*, their combination with *theion*, with exalting adjectives, and with figures of superior naming, such as Zeus Hypsistos.

Pagan monotheism is not an agreed context for the *angeloi* texts at Stratonikeia. Belayche's position is that the diversity of *angeloi* references found in the Stratonikeia texts reflects a polytheistic context.¹⁵⁶

At Stratonikeia the *angelos* and the *theion* inscriptions provide evidence of cultic activity which represented a response to religious change. The *angelos* itself, paired with the *theion*, is the object of

¹⁵⁴ Sheppard, "Pagan Cults of Angels," 83-5. Philo relates the Word of God [λόγος] to an intermediary, an 'eldest angel' or 'Angel' or 'Archangel' – Philo *Confus. Ling.* 146; *Quis... Heres* 205.

¹⁵⁵ See chapter two (Akmonia) and chapter seven (Miletos).

¹⁵⁶ Belayche, "*Angeloï*," 46. Polytheistic contexts are she says, characterised by local fragmentation and lack of doctrinal authority. Versnel, "Thrice One," 82 also refers to a tendency in some modern scholars to claim that Greek polytheism lacks transparent structure and is chaotic in its manifestation. I think the extent of evidence at Stratonikeia does not imply fragmentation, but concentration, so am not convinced by Belayche's or any similar such assertions here.

thanks and exaltation,¹⁵⁷ no matter whether conceived as a mediator to a highest god (Zeus, in the case of Stratonikeia), or otherwise.¹⁵⁸ The *theion* and the *angeloi* manifested the powers of a superior divinity. They are thus pagan expressions of monotheism.

The new ways of expressing divinity at Stratonikeia indicate that people were conceiving of god in a different way. The abstract names were part of the patterns noted throughout this study as movements toward pagan monotheism.

6.9 Conclusions: Pagan monotheism in the cultural environment

In this chapter, I trace the development of pagan monotheism in Asia Minor through analysis of the terminology associated with monotheism, by naming the difficulties of working backward from a modern religious mindset to a world where the constraints and meanings of religious terms were very different. I have considered the philosophical foundation of monotheism through the brief study of two Greek philosophers who imagined a singular, creating god who existed in a hierarchically structured universe. In this universe, various divine beings navigated realms, providing opportunities for human beings to experience the divine in multiple ways.

The transmission of philosophical monotheism into monotheistic cult activity happened as the changing cultural environment enabled new attitudes toward god to be ritually expressed, and for new experiences of god to be received. Epigraphical evidence of this is shown in religious attitudes and practices which departed from traditional

¹⁵⁷ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 60, who refers to devotion offered to the *angelos*, but not the *theion* as anything other than attributive. See Belayche, “*Angeloi*,” 65 on a different way of interpreting the usual equivalence given to *angelos* and *theion*.

¹⁵⁸ McCabe 45 = *IStr.* 1119: θεῖω ἀγγε - | λικῶ εὐχα - | ριστοῦμεν | ὑπὲρ σωτη - | ρίας - *to the angelos-like divinity we give thanks on behalf of (our) salvation*;
McCabe 46 = *IStr.* 1120: θεῖω ἄ - | γελικῶ | εὐχαρι - | στοῦμεν - *we give thanks to the angelos-like divinity*.

mainstream activities. New naming of the divine and personal experience of divine intervention reflect the role of the individual in the processes of cultural change in the new religious situation. It is in the context of minority groups that the evidence discussed in this chapter toward a movement pagan monotheism is observed.

In the next chapter, the evidence of pagan monotheism in the cultural environment is extended to cultic following of one specific god. Cults of the highest god, Theos Hypsistos, provided people from different cultural groups an opportunity to worship one god.

7. THE HIGHEST GOD AMONG PAGANS AND JEWS

We have travelled through the terrain of the new religious situation in Asia Minor through Chapter Five and in Chapter Six encountered the development of pagan monotheism. I have shown that within the new religious situation the philosophical foundations of monotheism provided a theoretical context for the movement toward practical, cultic expression in pagan contexts. I focussed on the phenomena of devotion to the *angeloι* and the *theion*, public confession, and the rule of divine justice in a local context. I investigated the processes of mediation as a means of accessing a remote highest god conceived in the philosophical construction of the universe. I concluded that the collective evidence of these practices directs interpreters to consider that one highest god was intended as the ultimate object of worship. The study of these practices confirmed they belonged to a spectrum of pagan monotheism.

This current chapter takes the study of pagan monotheism into the area of cult worship of a distinct highest god, Θεὸς Ὑψιστος, Theos Hypsistos. I will describe Theos Hypsistos as a high god of pagan monotheism; identify cults of Theos Hypsistos within Asia Minor through analysis of evidence; draw out features of the worship of Theos Hypsistos and discern why it was different from cultic worship of other gods. I will also discuss the relationship of Theos Hypsistos with other gods and cults, including Judaism.¹ From the interactive edges of

¹ This chapter excludes discussion on *hypsistos* references as they appear in relation to the acclamation εἰς θεός, one god. Rather than contributing to the task set here in affirming the presence of pagan cults of Theos Hypsistos in Asia Minor, examples of εἰς θεός refer to the exaltation of a god as one, not highest. Such studies belong specifically to the area of henotheism. For the seminal, extensive and excellent study on this aspect of pagan religious development, see E. Peterson, *EIS ΘΕΟΣ: Epigraphische, formgeschichtliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*,

Judaism, I investigate the phenomenon of the *theosebeis*, the god-worshippers, as they relate to the worship of Theos Hypsistos. This then sets up a background environment for the pagan theological oracles described in the next chapter. I set out in this chapter the evidence of Theos Hypsistos and suggest that it further clarifies the cultural tendency in Asia Minor toward monotheistic expressions of god which have emerged from a common cultural matrix.

As evidence of worship of a highest god in the Graeco-Roman world is widespread, two selection criteria will inform the evidence presented here. The first is geographic. As the focus in this thesis is geographically set in Asia Minor, data location within Asia Minor is prioritised.² Where evidence from elsewhere is used, it will be to highlight a point and provide explanatory information. The second criterion relates to cult and ritual activity. Data is included which gives evidence of ritual and cult activity associated with Theos Hypsistos as it assists the purpose of this chapter, even if on occasion it does not meet the first geographical criterion.

7.1 Theos Hypsistos as a high god of pagan monotheism

Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 24 (Göttingen, 1926). The exclusion of εἰς θεός references extends to eastern aretalogies belonging to cults of Serapis and Isis, despite multiple examples. Much scholarship has focussed on these and it is beyond the parameters of this thesis to include such an overview. See Nicole Belayche, “Deus deum... summorum maximus (*Apuleius*): ritual expressions of distinction in the divine world in the imperial period,” in *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire*, 141-66. Mitchell, “Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 172-3 does note in relation to Serapis that whilst he is joined in name to several major deities honoured throughout the Roman Empire, his name is never joined to Theos Hypsistos.

² From within Asia Minor cult examples from Karia, Ionia, Lydia, Mysia, Bithynia, Pontus, Paphlagonia, Galatia, Phrygia, Pisidia, Pamphylia, Lykia, Lykaonia, Cilicia and Cappadocia make up a dense and significant body of evidence for the worship of the highest god.

Evidence of the name Theos Hypsistos ranges from the third century BCE attestations in the Septuagint³ through to the patristic writings of the fifth century CE. Most of data considered here is from the second and third centuries CE, the high point of cult activity across the Roman Empire.⁴ Western Asia Minor has yielded the greatest amount of data. This geographical region aligns with the work of the previous chapters on pagan monotheistic activities. I can say from the spread of evidence that devotion to Theos Hypsistos existed within a cultural environment which supported pagan monotheism.

In a pagan context, the title Theos Hypsistos describes a supreme god not known by the traditional names of other pagan gods. ὕψιστος, *hypsistos*, most high, highest, is a superlative adjective from ὕψις, high, aloft. The *hypsistos* epithet designates a god as the highest – either alone (monotheism), or amongst others (henotheism). In the philosophical construction of the universe conceived by Plato and others, the highest god, the source of all creation, existed in a realm separated from all else. Other figures inhabited the hierarchy of divine and semi-divine beings between the the highest god and the mortal creation. There was no direct access to the highest god. In practical pagan monotheistic activity access to the highest god was achieved through the ritual practices noted in the previous chapter.

Theos Hypsistos cult worship took pagan monotheistic practices another step. The evidence of cult activities associated with Theos Hypsistos presented in the following sections suggest that there was access to the god for worshippers. The other divine and semi-divine beings believed to inhabit the hierarchical structure of the universe do not appear to be involved in the process of accessing the highest god. This indicates that cult occurrences of Theos Hypsistos were

³ Collar, *Religious Networks*, 227, 241 suggests that the term ‘Theos Hypsistos’ was the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew *El Elyon*, which was associated with Judaism. This translation was differentiated from Yahweh or Adonai.

⁴ Collar, *Religious Networks*, 224.

something new, a bypassing of traditional religious ideas, a development in the religious activities of people. In Asia, there is sufficient pagan epigraphical evidence, and some literary evidence, to deduce a cult following of Theos Hypsistos as a single, highest god not associated with any other traditional god or gods.⁵ This evidence will be discussed throughout this chapter.

I suggest in this study that in the activity of cults of Theos Hypsistos the honouring of one highest god grew beyond philosophical speculation into practical devotion. This was a significant departure from traditional religion, an expression of the new religious situation. Awareness of Theos Hypsistos as the highest god created spaces where cultural crossover between pagans and Jews occurred. This is especially notable in the *theosebeis* occurrences to be discussed below.

The ubiquity of pagan polytheism and the many practices of honouring gods has given some scholars the view that a figure who is named *hypsistos* is not necessarily always the highest.⁶ Who is *hypsistos* may be a subjective opinion, incorporating the desire to placate, appease or flatter rather than state an irrefutable conviction. With the advances in the Roman Empire which made travel, communication and trade easier, cities and countryside were filled with people from many different places. The unintentional offence of a local god was always to be avoided, thus the applicability of naming unknown gods *hypsistos*.⁷

Trebilco says that in Asia Minor the naming of various gods as *hypsistos* occurred as a cultural trend.⁸ This reflects the diversity of

⁵ The best catalogues of Theos Hypsistos evidence are found in Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 128-47, and "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 198-208.

⁶ For alternative ideas about Theos Hypsistos not being a unique deity, but rather one god exalted above others, see for example Belayche, "Deus deum," 163; Ustinova, "*Thiasoi* of Theos Hypsistos," 164-5; Chaniotis, "Megatheism," 112-40.

⁷ The famous altar in Athens inscribed ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ, to an unknown god, in Acts 17.23, is an example of the desire not to unintentionally offend any god.

⁸ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 143.

the cultural environment, including the increasing influence of the individual within it. It does not discount the existence of a specific cult of Theos Hypsistos. The diversity of *hypsistos* representations throughout Asia Minor does require care when determining the context of references. Bearing in mind the popularity of the *hypsistos* epithet within the cultural environment, there is nonetheless sufficient evidence of cult activity directed towards Theos Hypsistos to name this as a specific god, and not merely a representation of another god.⁹ The exception is Zeus Hypsistos, which I will discuss below as belonging in most cases to a more traditional body of pagan religion.

7.2 Cults of Theos Hypsistos

A religious cult is a following of people organised enough to have “a particular system of religious worship, especially with reference to its rites and ceremonies.”¹⁰ In pagan religion some of the indicators of cult activity include: having distinct worship practices which sometimes included processes of initiation, having identifiable places of worship, appointed personnell to act as officials, and the formation of associations with social and other benefits.¹¹ Here the evidence of behaviour among followers of Theos Hypsistos amounting to cult activity is measured against these descriptors.

Stephen Mitchell has extensively surveyed and catalogued cults of Theos Hypsistos and I have used his work in analysing the cultic

⁹ As Collar, *Religious Networks*, 244.

¹⁰ *Macquarie Australian Dictionary*.

¹¹ For example, the god Mithras is known by distinct iconography which connects to a central worship ritual involving the sacrifice of a bull. Worship and social activities were focussed on a temple. Associations extended benefits of a social group to members. Some followers participated in the mysteries of the cult through initiation. This defined them as subject to the god and inner members of the exclusive particularities of the cult. These characteristics make it possible to claim that there were cults of Mithras operating in the ancient world.

evidence of Theos Hypsistos.¹² Mitchell's surveys of Theos Hypsistos are the most comprehensive and easily accessible resource on the evidence of Theos Hypsistos and associated cults. They are an invaluable resource for analysing the appearance of Theos Hypsistos among the religious evidence of Asia Minor. The body of evidence is mostly epigraphical, with some limited archaeological data.¹³

When Mitchell completed his 2010 survey he ascertained there were 375 inscriptions relating to the cult of Theos Hypsistos dating from the second century BCE to the fourth century CE. Not all these inscriptions were pagan. Inscriptions were identified mostly as votive dedications. 220 were addressed to Theos Hypsistos, 121 to Zeus Hypsistos and 34 to Hypsistos (without another name).¹⁴ This means that only 220 refer to Theos Hypsistos by that name. As some of these were not pagan, this reduces the evidence base for pagan cults of Theos Hypsistos. Nonetheless, the number of attestations is still significant and warrants the discussion here. Of dedicators, 73 were women, 152 men.¹⁵ Some of this data falls outside of the time frame and is geographically remote from this study. This data will be used sparingly where it elucidates a cultic context.

The widespread appearance of Theos Hypsistos dedications creates some difficulty in assigning provenance, especially when an inscription has been removed from its context. I note that the removal of evidence from its original location, either in antiquity or in modern times, limits

¹² I have especially valued the compilation of inscriptions in his catalogues. See especially Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 81-148; "Further Thoughts on the Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 167-208.

¹³ Mitchell's purpose in collecting data on Theos Hypsistos is to identify monotheistic worship outside of Judaism and Christianity in the Roman and late Roman worlds. His base position presumes pagan monotheism is a valid term to describe the context of Theos Hypsistos inscriptions which are not obviously Jewish.

¹⁴ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 167.

¹⁵ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 178-9. These figures do not include groups that were not family. Mitchell says that the significant number of female dedicators indicates that the poor or disadvantaged found a place within the cult. See also Collar, *Religious Networks*, 224.

the conclusions that can be drawn about the extent of cults of Theos Hypsistos within the environment.

Useful literary evidence of pagan cults of Theos Hypsistos also exists which provides insight into the spread of the highest god cult. Gregory of Nazianzus¹⁶ in a funeral oration for his father dated to 374 CE provides an account of some characteristics of Theos Hypsistos followers which are consistent with cult activity. Gregory's own father was a follower of Theos Hypsistos before he converted to Christianity. The document is later than the epigraphical data covered in this chapter, but it does provide further information on the existence of cults of Theos Hypsistos and some ritual practices. As such it may assist in determining if followers behaved in ways that conformed to identifiable cult activities:

ἐκ δυοῖν ἐναντιωτάτοιον συγκεκραμένης Ἑλληνικῆς τε πλάνης καὶ νομικῆς τερατείας, ὧν ἀμφοτέρων τὰ μέρη φυγῶν ἐκ μερῶν συνετέθη. τῆς μὲν γὰρ τὰ εἰδῶλα καὶ τὰς θυσίας ἀποπεμπόμενοι, τιμῶσι τὸ πῦρ καὶ τὰ λύχνα· τῆς δὲ τὸ σάββατον αἰδούμενοι καὶ τῆς περὶ τὰ βρώματα ἔστιν ἅ μικρολογία τὴν περιτομὴν ἀτιμάζουσιν. Ὑψιστάριοι τοῖς ταπεινοῖς ὄνομα, καὶ ὁ παντοκράτωρ δὴ μόνος αὐτοῖς σεβάσμιος.¹⁷

It (the group from which Gregory's father was a part) was from two most contrary ways, being mixed up with both Hellenic error and quackery based on law, of which the parts were put together avoiding some parts of both. For on the one hand they dismiss the idols and the sacrifices, and they honour fire and lamps; whilst respecting the Sabbath and observe the smallest detail regarding meat and they dishonour circumcision. They are called Hypsistarians by the humble, and the Almighty is the only one indeed who is an object of worship for them.

From this passage features of a religious cult may be discerned through the Christian bias of the author. Christian bias against Judaism and Greek religion is reflected in the derogatory use of

¹⁶ Nazianzus was a town in Cappadocia.

¹⁷ Gregory of Nazianzus *Oratio* 18.5.

Ἑλληνικῆς τε πλάνης, Hellenic error, καὶ νομικῆς τερατείας, quackery based on the law. Both Greek and Jewish practices formed part of Gregory's interpretation of his father's religious background. From Judaism, the avoidance of idols, sacrifices and circumcision, honouring the Sabbath, and being concerned about sacrificed meat are identifiable features of distinction from pagan cults. From paganism, the honouring of fire and use of lamps indicates ritual activity. Gregory intimates that the religion described was a hybrid of two types of religion, pagan and Jewish. From this passage, a name for the followers is mentioned, the *Hypsistarioi*. This designation is not the same as applied to Jews, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, the Judaeans.

There is no pre-patristic evidence to suggest that followers self-identified by the name Ἑψιστάρῳοι, *Hypsistarioi*. It was likely a name applied by others, either Christians concerned to separate the cult from their own, or Jews who similarly wanted to express the boundaries of their cult. Some *hypsistos* inscriptions were Jewish, and these will be discussed below. The designation τοῖς ταπεινοῖς from Gregory's passage implies an attitude of humility among worshippers. This attitude is consistent with practices of public confession, devotion to the gods of justice and the abstract deities who manifested the powers of a superior, remote god. These practices are associated with pagan monotheism, as discussed in the previous chapter.

From this short passage of Gregory, some characteristics of a cult are apparent in followers of Theos Hypsistos. Gregory at least, and no doubt others through his witness, knew of followers of Theos Hypsistos by ritual behaviour and religious attitude by the time of Gregory. They were distinct from both Judaism and mainstream paganism, even as they shared some practices. The existence of this cult indicates that assimilating processes were at work between these groups.

Two other patristic sources refer to followers of Theos Hypsistos.¹⁸ Given the chronological dissimilarity of these two other sources with the epigraphical evidence it is sufficient here to make use of Gregory of Nazianzus alone. I acknowledge the danger in deductively reconstructing the cult through this literary evidence, which is why I base the weight of my conclusions on the epigraphical references which fit my two selection criteria.

7.3 Zeus Hypsistos

From the data referring to *hypsistos* there are a significant number of dedications to Zeus as most high.¹⁹ These references are almost certainly pagan dedications.²⁰ Zeus has long been referred to as the highest god in traditional paganism.²¹ In this traditional context Zeus' superiority is recognised within the Graeco-Roman pantheon. His position is in a henotheistic relationship with the other gods, where Zeus is highest among others. Zeus is son of the highest Titan Kronos. Zeus is king and father of the other Olympian gods. Although he is highest among the gods, within the Graeco-Roman pantheon he is still on the same level. He does not exist removed from the world in the way of Theos Hypsistos.²² In Asia Minor most of the references to Zeus Hypsistos are found in areas most culturally Hellenised.²³ The city of Stratonikeia is an example.²⁴ Most recently Macedonia has yielded archaeological and epigraphical finds related to Zeus Hypsistos.²⁵ This

¹⁸ Gregory of Nyssa *Contra Eunomium* 38, (Nyssa is also in Cappadocia); Epiphanius *Panarion* 80.1-2. Both sources cited in Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 92-97.

¹⁹ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 167, cited above. 121 out of 375 *hypsistos* references are to Zeus Hypsistos.

²⁰ See Collar, *Religious Networks*, Chapter Five on a different interpretation of Zeus and Theos Hypsistos and the relationship with Judaism.

²¹ Nilsson, *High God and the Mediator*, 102-3.

²² Although the title 'Theos Hypsistos' or just 'Hypsistos' could be used of Zeus. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 128.

²³ Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 100.

²⁴ See study on Stratonikeia in Chapter Six section 6.8.

²⁵ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 170-71. From his 2010 catalogue seventeen out of nineteen new inscriptions from Macedonia are to Zeus

is not surprising, given the proximity of Mount Olympos to Macedonian territory. As Macedonia is beyond the geographical scope of this thesis I will not be considering these.

As discussed in the last chapter, the figure of Zeus Hypsistos at Stratonikeia is very much more a known, named pagan god with a unified personality, even when he was understood as highest. The traditional correlation of Zeus as the celestial deity who hurled thunderbolts is preserved in a first century CE stele dedicated in Miletoupolis in Mysia:

Τιβέριος Κλαύδιος	<i>Tiberios Klaudios</i>
Σύντροφος Διὸς	<i>Syntrophos to Zeus</i>
ὑψίστω κατ' ἐπιτα-	<i>Hypsistos according to a command</i>
γὴν ἐκ τῶ<ν> ἰδί-	<i>set this up out of his own</i>
ων ἀνέθηκεν	<i>means</i>
βρονταίῳ ²⁶	<i>to the thundering one</i>

This early imperial dedication is accompanied with an image of Zeus with the thunderbolt beside an altar, a herm and a female figure lying on the ground. It appears as a more prominent dedication than the simpler offerings to the abstract Theos Hypsistos suggested by the evidence discussed throughout this chapter. The epithet *hypsistos* applied to Zeus in these instances is a means of exaltation of a figure traditionally identified as ruler of the gods, rather than an indication of a remote, supreme god in the monotheistic sense which followers of Theos Hypsistos conceived.²⁷

Hypsistos, and from his 1999 catalogue twenty out of 26 inscriptions from Macedonia are to Zeus Hypsistos.

²⁶ Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue no. 185 = *I. Kyzikos* 2.5.

²⁷ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 188 says that dedications to Zeus Hypsistos indicate a pagan background of followers of Theos Hypsistos. He suggests that background did not interfere with "core beliefs" about a highest god. I am unconvinced that followers in *hypsistos* cults formulated anything that could be described as "core beliefs." I say this based on the study in Chapter Five on traditional pagan religion, in which the word 'belief' itself conflicts with the embeddedness of pagan religion within the cultural structures. See North, *The Development of Religious Pluralism*, 178. Despite the changes in the religious situation and the development of new cults and new ways of understanding god and

The epithet *hypsistos* as a designation other than to Zeus, occurred only rarely.²⁸ The feminine form *hypsistē* is found with Astarte in a Roman relief.²⁹ The broad scope of evidence I have surveyed as part of this study leads me to agree with Mitchell that there are limited examples of relational epithets of *hypsistos* to gods other than Zeus. This limitation cannot of course include the Jewish and Christian god, who is also known as *hypsistos*.³⁰

7.4 Cult associations of Theos Hypsistos

Like other pagan cults, followers of Theos Hypsistos formed cult associations.³¹ Evidence of this may be seen in epigraphy and archaeological finds. There is a concentration of data of Theos Hypsistos cult associations from Tanais, which is in modern day Russia, at the extreme of the Roman Empire.³² Other evidence beyond Asia Minor exists, from Thessalonike, from Pydna in Macedonia, Pirot in Serbia, and from Egypt. Although these are outside of the geographical range of this study I mention them because evidence anywhere for cult associations of Theos Hypsistos builds a case for saying that followers of the highest god formed cults around this god, not just any god who happened to be called *hypsistos*. Associations did not form around the occasional designation of a god as *hypsistos*, but around a definite god.

gods, the establishment of beliefs was not part of the pagan experience in the first three centuries.

²⁸ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 171-3. He notes his dissension to Nicole Belayche, "*Hypsistos*: une voie de l'exaltation des dieux dans le polythéisme gréco-romain," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 7 (2005a): 40, who cites examples of Kybele, Serapis and Mithras as *hypsistos*.

²⁹ Mitchell cites *IGUR* 1.136.

³⁰ Mitchell's study is here only concerned with pagan examples.

³¹ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 177.

³² Worshippers of Theos Hypsistos at Tanais have been identified as belonging to the σύνοδος (assembly, meeting) of θιασεῖται/θιασῶται (member of a θίασος, a band or company – association). For another view see Ustinova, "The *thiasoi* of Theos Hypsistos in Tanais," 150-80.

It is reasonable to presume that if followers of Theos Hypsistos formed associations outside of Asia Minor that they also did so within Asia Minor. Association activity is evidence of cults.

Mitchell suggests with Harland³³ an interpretation of the word ἀδελφοί, brothers, might suggest a cult association of Theos Hypsistos at Sinope in Pontus.

θεῶ ὑψίστῳ οἱ ἀδελφοί εὐχόμενοι³⁴
the praying brothers (offer this) to Theos Hypsistos.

Cult associations provided members opportunities other than worship alone.³⁵ A well preserved example of a cult association for Zeus Hypsistos gives an indication of the breadth of activities association life provided. I suggest that associations of Theos Hypsistos were similar in function to those of Zeus Hypsistos.

³³ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues and Congregations*, 32. Mitchell, “Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 177 n. 47 qualifies that ἀδελφοί in this context might simply refer to four male siblings.

³⁴ G. Doublet, “Inscriptions de Paphlagonie,” *BCH* 13 (1889): 303-4 no.7.

³⁵ In Thessalonike an association of Theos Hypsistos worshippers met for meals (*symposia*) and provided funds for a colonnade on a building adjacent to a sanctuary of Theos Hypsistos. *IG* x.2, 69-70; Mitchell, “The cult of Theos Hypsistos,” catalogue nos. 55-8; Mitchell, “Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos,” catalogue no. A28 = *SEG* 47 (1997) 963.



Figure 10: Monument depicting the activities of an association of Zeus Hypsistos from Panormos in Kyzikos. Picture source: M. Perdrizet, “Reliefs mysiens,” *BCH* 23 (1899): figure IV, in Harland, *Associations, Synagogues and Congregations*, 56 Figure 7.

The text of the inscription reads:

Διὶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ τῷ χω[ρίῳ] Θάλλος Ἐπώνυμος τὸν τελαμῶνα
 ἀπέδωκα³⁶
*Thallos Eponymos set up the band (part of the pillar) to Zeus
 Hypsistos and to the village*

The dedication comes from Kyzikos in Mysia and is dated to the imperial period.³⁷ The text is inscribed in an architrave of a monument. Underneath this is a relief with three gods. Zeus is in the centre holding a staff. Apollo and Artemis flank him. Each hold a libation cup. Under these in a less prominent place six figures are depicted reclining at a meal. In the lower panel, there are figures representing the entertainment offered the eating guests. These include a woman dancing, a man playing a Phrygian flute, another man playing a percussion instrument and a fourth man mixing wine

³⁶ *GIBM* IV.2 1007; Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” catalogue no. 182; Cook, *Zeus* vol. 2.2. 881 Plate xxxix; E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, Vol. 3 Figure 845 (New York: Pantheon, 1953-68).

³⁷ Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 139.

for the meal.³⁸ The scene combines the religious and social aspects of cult association activities.

7.4.1 Cult personnel

References to cult personnel as evidence of the presence of cults of Theos Hypsistos are adjunct to cult association activity. A certain Oulpios Karpos from Miletos in the mid second century CE is named prophet and priest of Theos Hypsistos. Oulpios Karpos was a member of the city council of Miletos, who is referred to in the *Tübingen Theosophy* as having consulted the oracle of Apollo at Didyma.³⁹ Two dedications honour him, one from an association of gardeners, the other from a group of shellfish or razor fish drainers:

τὸν ἱερέα τοῦ ἁγιωτά- του [θεοῦ ὑψί]στου σωτήρος Οὔλιον Κάρπον	<i>the standing of the gardeners (honoured) the priest of the most holy</i>
βουλευτὴν ὁ στατίων τῶν κατὰ πόλιν κηπου- ρῶν τὸν ἴδιον εὐεργέτη[ν]	<i>saviour Theos Hypsistos Oulpios Karpos councillor of the city according to his good</i>
ὑπὲρ τῆς ἑαυτῶν σωτηρί[ας] ⁴⁰	<i>work on behalf of their own salvation</i>
Οὔλιον Κάρπον τὸν προφήτην τοῦ ἁγιωτάτου θεοῦ	<i>the cause of the razor fish drainers (honoured) the prophet of the</i>
ὑψίστου	<i>most holy Theos Hypsistos</i>
ὁ στόλος τῶν σωληνο- κεντῶν τὸν ἴδιον εὐ-	<i>Oulpios Karpos for his own good work</i>

³⁸ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues and Congregations*, 56-7.

³⁹ Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 108.

⁴⁰ Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue no. 135; *OGIS* 755.

εργέτην διὰ πάντων⁴¹

through all things

These two inscriptions provide evidence of an official involved in the cult of Theos Hypsistos who was also an esteemed member of the city (βουλευτής, councillor). Oulpios Karpos had a following himself because of his role as a priest, prophet and doer of good works (ίδιος εὐεργέτης). The dedicators of these inscriptions believed that being associated with Oulpios Karpos was a benefit to them. The connection of an important civic person with worship of Theos Hypsistos invests cults of the highest god with status. It indicates a high level of acculturation with the mainstream. In the same way, the Jewish community in Akmonia named the founding patron Julia Severa in an inscription marking repairs to the synagogue.⁴² The inclusion of Julia's name gave the synagogue status in the city. Evidence of personnel functioning in cultic roles, such as Oulpios Karpos, provide further evidence of cults of a specific god, Theos Hypsistos.

7.5 Features of the worship of Theos Hypsistos

Some aspects of ritual devotion to Theos Hypsistos were like other cults. Recording devotions as inscriptions was one of the similarities. Honorary and votive inscriptions were especially prominent in the second and third centuries when the “epigraphic habit” was at its height.⁴³ The conventional formulae of honour in Theos Hypsistos cults included words such as εὐχὴν, prayer, εὐζάμενος, having made a prayer, εὐχαριστῶν, giving thanks, ἀνέθηκε, set up.⁴⁴ This indicates that prayers and thanksgivings were central to ritual.

⁴¹ Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” catalogue no. 136; *OGIS* 756.

⁴² See Chapter Two.

⁴³ Term given by MacMullen, “The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire,” who provides samples of data from papyri, ostraka and epitaphs in which the second and third centuries show a peak in activity not just in Asia Minor, but throughout the empire.

⁴⁴ Mitchell, “Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 174.

As shown in the literary passage of Gregory of Nazianzus discussed above, ritual worship of Theos Hypsistos included symbols of fire and torchlight: τιμῶσι τὸ πῦρ καὶ τὰ λύχνα – *they honour fire and lamps*. This may also be seen in the Oinoanda oracle to be discussed in the next chapter, where the high god exists: ἐν πυρὶ ναίων – *dwelling in fire*. Lamps were a feature of worship which had a long tradition in Greek religion. In Greek temples night celebrations were brightly lit with lamps to honour the gods and to provide lighting for worshippers.⁴⁵ In proximity to the Oinoanda inscription is a simple dedication to Theos Hypsistos with small cut ledges for worshippers to place lamps on.⁴⁶ Lamps in the context of Theos Hypsistos worship were for ritual rather than functional use.⁴⁷ This would particularly be the case in open air sanctuaries such as Oinoanda, where small oil lamps would unlikely provide sufficient light to conduct night worship ceremonies.

An early inscription from Hierocaesareia in Lydia to Theos Hypsistos is another example affirming that worshippers offered lamps to the highest god:

Τειμόθεος Διαγόρου	<i>Teimotheos son of Diagoras</i>
Λαβραντίδης καὶ Μόσχιον	<i>Labrantides and Moschion</i>
Τειμοθέου ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ θεῶι ὑψίστῳ εὐχὴν	<i>the wife of Teimotheos made a prayer to Theos Hypsistos</i>
τὸν βωμόν. Διαγόρας, Τειμόθεος, Πύθεος,	<i>on the bomos/altar. Diagoras, Teimotheos,</i>

⁴⁵ According to Iamblichos *On the Mysteries* 3.11, at Klaros ritual practices of the oracle of Apollo took place at night: ἐν τισὶ τακταῖς νυξώ – *on certain prescribed nights*.

⁴⁶ A. S. Hall, “The Klarian Oracle at Oenoanda,” *ZPE* 32 (1978): 265 from the second to third centuries CE: Χρωματὶς θεῶι ὑψίστῳ τὸν λύχνον εὐχὴν – *Chromatis offered a lamp prayer to Theos Hypsistos*. This dedication is discussed in context in Chapter Eight alongside the theological oracle at Oinoanda. The importance of its location enabling worshippers to face the rising sun connects fire and light as cult symbols.

⁴⁷ Mitchell, “Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 176-7.

οἱ Τιμοθέου τοῦ Διαγόρου υἱοὶ

Λαβραντίδαι τὰς λυχναψίας

Ἐψίστωι ἀνέθηκαν⁴⁸

Pythios,

the Labrantidian sons of
Timotheos

son of Diagoras set up
lamplighting

to Hypsistos

The connection of Theos Hypsistos with lamplight and fire locates the god in the upper air, near the sun. This association created a natural link between Theos Hypsistos and Helios, the sun god of the traditional pantheon, identified alongside Apollo. Helios worship, which rose to prominence in the third century CE in Asia Minor, included orientation toward the sun.⁴⁹

Worship practices that were orientated toward the sun give some insight into the places where worship of Theos Hypsistos happened. Open air sanctuaries were likely.⁵⁰ In the open, worshippers would be free to face the sun and upper sky. The physical location of the theological oracle at Oinoanda, which lies in the context of worship of Theos Hypsistos, was in the open air on a high wall above the city. The geographical significance for Theos Hypsistos worship forms part of the discussion of the following chapter.

There were no specific temples found for Theos Hypsistos, although the god was present and honoured where other gods were worshipped.⁵¹ This suggests that a physical space was not necessary for worship.⁵² When worship did happen in interior spaces, these were modest. Ustinova notes cellars of houses in Tanais as cult places for Theos

⁴⁸ Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” catalogue no. 169; *TAM* 5.2 1400. The inscription is dated approximately to the first or second centuries CE.

⁴⁹ As did the ritual prescribed in the Oinoanda oracle.

⁵⁰ Collar, *Religious Networks*, 224 referring to, “a forgotten, disused, open-air space in first-second century AD Athens, women and men of apparently humble means were gathering to give thanks to an abstract, apparently largely aniconic deity they knew as ‘the highest god.’”

⁵¹ See section below on Theos Hypsistos in relationship to other gods.

⁵² Collar, *Religious Networks*, 269.

Hypsistos worship.⁵³ Mitchell identifies a probable worship space of Theos Hypsistos in an apse of a room in a house in Melli in Pisidia.⁵⁴

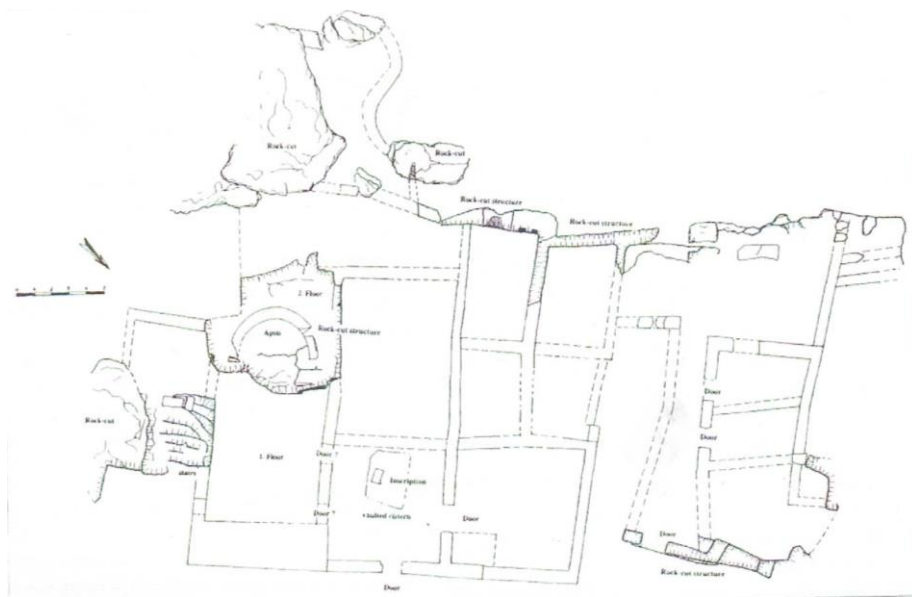


Figure 11: Plan of the house at Melli. The sanctuary of Theos Hypsistos proposed by Mitchell is the apse on the left. Plan drawn by R. Ezra Erb and Yaprak Özkönü, in Mitchell, “Melli,” 154 Fig. 15.

The proposed sanctuary lay in an apse at the west end of the upper storey of the house. The room was found without the decorations of mosaics and statues typical of a Graeco-Roman reception room in a wealthy house.⁵⁵ The plain features of the whole house are dissimilar to the other houses found in Melli, which Mitchell says supports his proposition that the apsed room was a worship space for Theos Hypsistos.

“The shape, size and modest dimensions of the cult room, as well as its location away from the central areas of civic cult, certainly do not suggest that it was designed for worshippers of a pagan civic pantheon. I would tentatively conclude that this was not a pagan temple for the traditional gods, but a sanctuary which was originally

⁵³ Ustinova, “Thiasoi of Theos Hypsistos,” 179.

⁵⁴ Stephen Mitchell, “Inscriptions from Melli (Kocaaliler) in Pisidia,” *EA* 53 (2003): 155: “I would tentatively conclude that this was not a pagan temple for the traditional gods, but a sanctuary which was originally designed for monotheistic purposes, probably the worship of *theos hypsistos*, the highest god.”

⁵⁵ Mitchell, “Melli,” 153.

designed for monotheistic purposes, probably the worship of *theos hypsistos*, the highest god.”⁵⁶

An inscription addressed, θεοῖς καὶ θεαῖς,⁵⁷ to all the male and female gods, was found in the house. Mitchell suggests the inscription is an interpretation of the Oinoanda oracle. The Melli inscription will be further discussed in Chapter Nine.

Animal sacrifice was not practised in the worship of Theos Hypsistos.⁵⁸ Neither was there visual representation of the highest god.⁵⁹ Similarly dedications to the *theion* and *angeloi* show no visual representation.⁶⁰

Lack of images of Theos Hypsistos has presented challenges to interpreting the cults, and contributes to why the cult is identified with Judaism, or a with religious practices resembling Judaism, as Gregory relates in the passage above. Collar suggests that identification of the cult with Judaism is shown in the increased epigraphic evidence in the second and third centuries,⁶¹ and that this increase in visibility coincided with the removal of the *fiscus Judaicus* which permitted non-Jewish followers of Judaism, such as ‘god-fearers’

⁵⁶ Mitchell, “Melli,” 155.

⁵⁷ Mitchell, “Melli,” 151 no.13.

⁵⁸ Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 108; “Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 174 n. 35 refers to the presence of “bucrania” (*LS* βούκρανος = βούπρωρος, *with the face of an ox*). The “bucrania” are a generic decorative design on inscriptions, which Mitchell says do not amount to practice of animal sacrifice. Catalogue A1 = *IG* II.2. 4056; *SEG* 50 (2000) 201 from Athens, first or second century CE: [-? ὑψ]ίστω ὑπὲρ Ζωπύρας | [καὶ Ἄνθ]εστήριου – *To Hypsistos on behalf of Zōpuras and Anthesterion*. Mitchell qualifies that this inscription may be a dedication to Zeus Hypsistos rather than Theos Hypsistos. Two other examples exist, one from Macedonia and one from Thessaly.

⁵⁹ Collar, *Religious Networks*, 224 referring to the “aniconic deity” Theos Hypsistos. See n. 50 above. However, Collar, 255 also says the image of the eagle was associated with cults of both Theos and Zeus Hypsistos. Ustinova, “Thiasoi of Theos Hypsistos,” 155-57 on the other hand, regards a dedication on a slab from Tanais in recognition of the festival, the ‘Day of Tanais,’ by members of an association of Theos Hypsistos as displaying an image of Theos Hypsistos – well enough known in the city that the god’s exact name is not mentioned in the inscription. The figure depicts a long-haired mounted rider wearing trousers, coat, cloak and beard, carrying a staff. An altar with fire is present before the rider. *CIRB* 1259 dated to 104 CE.

⁶⁰ Although sometimes the *theion* represented another god, such as Mēn in Lydia and Phrygia. See Chapter Six.

⁶¹ In addition to the “epigraphic habit,” mentioned above.

to practice their religion.⁶² The argument presented here does not limit followers of Theos Hypsistos to Jewish practices, but considers the emergence of independent pagan monotheistic traditions alongside Judaism.

Theos Hypsistos, the *theion* and *angeloi*, which I suggest throughout this study are indicators of pagan monotheism, were not anthropomorphically conceived deities in the tradition of pagan imaging.⁶³ Lack of animal sacrifice and lack of visual representation of the god distinguish cults of Theos Hypsistos from other pagan gods.⁶⁴ Other activities, such as cult association activity, practice of prayer, lamp lighting, and orientation toward the sun are not unique to Theos Hypsistos worship.

Together the evidence of lamp lighting, prayer, orientation toward the sun and upper air, cult association activity and cult personnel, lack of visual imagery, lack of animal sacrifice, contribute to the appearance and practices of cult worship of Theos Hypsistos. These things are set within the cultural context of the monotheistic-type practices already described: devotion to the *theion*, *angeloi*, divine justice and public confession, with a corresponding overall attitude of the humility of human beings before the unknown divine typical of monotheism. The cult practices directed toward Theos Hypsistos were also set within the philosophically constructed universe where a supreme divinity exists remote from the created world.

There is no evidence of initiation processes into cults of Theos Hypsistos.

⁶² Collar, *Religious Networks*, 255-56, and throughout Chapters Four and Five. However, at 257-58, she does qualify that the connection of Theos Hypsistos to Judaism does not apply to all the evidence all the time.

⁶³ Images of eagles have been found on dedications to Zeus Hypsistos, especially in Macedonia and Thrace. These are not to be considered alongside the Theos Hypsistos data, as discussed above.

⁶⁴ Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 108.

Based on the above analysis, there is sufficient data to attest to the presence of cults of Theos Hypsistos and followers of the god. Within cults there was activity which correlates to other pagan cults. There were likely places of worship, even though these were small. There were associations and there were cult personnel. It is difficult from the evidence to work out how well-known cults of Theos Hypsistos were. There is nonetheless sufficient evidence to suggest that there was a cult following of Theos Hypsistos as a distinct god of pagan monotheism in Asia Minor and beyond.⁶⁵

7.5.1 Types of dedication to Theos Hypsistos

Worshippers of Theos Hypsistos were not always concerned to be recognised in their dedications. Some inscriptions without the name of the dedicator reflect a tendency towards anonymity.⁶⁶ This may indicate a private, more personalised relationship with the god was sought. An attitude of anonymity in dedications fits with the rising trajectory of individuals seeking god. I have identified the role of individuals as contributing to the changed religious environment.

Monuments honouring Theos Hypsistos were mostly modest. They included votive dedications, simple altars, basic texts. This stands in contrast to many other pagan cults in which the offering of grand monuments in a highly competitive environment became marks of status. An example of a modest anonymous dedication from Aspendos in Pamphylia is typical of the Theos Hypsistos evidence:

θεῶ ἀψευ[δεῖ καὶ]	<i>a prayer to a god truthful</i>
ἀχειροποιήτῳ	<i>and not made by hand.</i>
εὐχίην. ⁶⁷	

⁶⁵ Collar, *Religious Networks*, 269 proposes that there was “a unified cult of the Highest God,” here and throughout the chapter.

⁶⁶ Mitchell, “Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 175.

⁶⁷ *SEG* 38 (1988) 1335.

The inscription was found on a small cylindrical altar.⁶⁸ The descriptors ἀψευδός and ἀχειροποιήτος are also found in late oracular texts. This might provide a link between Theos Hypsistos cults and the theological statements issued by some of the oracle centres in Asia Minor. I explore the highest god in the context of theological oracles in Chapters Eight and Nine. Use of ἀχειροποιήτος, not made by hand, unmade, is an indication that followers conceived of this god in a way that fits with a Greek philosophical interpretation of the universe.⁶⁹ In this view the supreme, creating god exists beyond the realm of human beings. The god itself is not created. The word ἀχειροποιήτος, not made by hand, points to a god who does not exist in relationship to other gods, who is thus ὕψιστος, highest.

Another example of an individual dedication of the simpler type, this time recording the name of the dedicator, dated the second century CE from Dorylaion in Phrygia reads:

Νεῖλος	<i>Neilos</i>
Δημοσ- θένου	<i>son of Demosthenes</i>
[θ]εῶ ὑψί[σ]τω εὐχ- ήν ⁷⁰	<i>a prayer to Theos Hypsistos</i>

The text appears on a small limestone altar with an ear of corn and acroteria in the pediment. The corn and acroteria are common pagan symbols which would likely be found in the context of many other cults. It is the dedication itself which identifies it as belonging to the Theos Hypsistos corpus, not specific accompanying symbols such as might happen in another cult dedication.⁷¹ Use of common symbols in epigraphy across different cults was a typical practice discussed in the

⁶⁸ Mitchell, “Further Thoughts on the Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 176 claims that the scale of this example was typical of *hypsistos* dedications.

⁶⁹ As set out in Chapter Six.

⁷⁰ Mitchell, “Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos,” catalogue no. A54; *SEG* 44 (1994) 1058; M. Riel, *ZA* 44 (1994): 169 no. 25.

⁷¹ For example, the lunar crescent would indicate a dedication to Mēn. A menorah would indicate a dedication to the Jewish god.

assimilation of Jews in Akmonia. They represent a generic type of stone carving on altars used in multiple contexts.

In Akmonia, examples of Jewish sarcophagi in a pagan style and displaying pagan symbols give evidence of acculturating practices. Sharing certain things, such as burial ornamentation, between cultural groups did not compromise the identity and core distinction of a minority group. Instead they reflect degrees of acculturation. In the Theos Hypsistos inscription above, the corn and acroteria acted as simple symbols. The corn at least indicated a religious dedication, probably a fertility symbol, but without aligning the dedicator to any one god. It is only the text that provides distinction.

In a time when writing on stone and setting up monuments was a means of promoting one's achievements and status, it is worthwhile asking why dedications in cults of Theos Hypsistos were generally small, no matter the status of the person offering it. Cult members could come from any social position, yet they tended not to worship extravagantly, or advertise their involvement with the cult. Roman citizens featured in inscriptions, although generally their monuments were similarly modest.⁷² Possible explanations may include that Theos Hypsistos was not officially recognised as part of the pantheon of the gods of the cities across the Roman Empire. Aligning oneself to any cults of the highest god would therefore have little public benefit. If there was little public benefit to being associated with Theos Hypsistos, it makes it more likely that the associations of gardeners and razor fish drainers referred to above included a prominent citizen's name in their dedications to improve the status of the cult.

From the general modesty observed of dedications however, it seems that personal relationship with the god was more important to followers than public status. The desire for personal relationship with

⁷² Mitchell, "Further thoughts in the cult of Theos Hypsistos, 179.

a god was part of the trend towards individualism in the first three imperial centuries.

The lack of conformity to regular pagan cults, particularly in relation to blood sacrifice, likely contributed to Theos Hypsistos cults being unrecognised in the traditional pantheon. The absence of visual representations of Theos Hypsistos was also different from how other pagan gods were identified. This would limit the possibilities for monumental recognition. It may simply be that cult numbers were small and in a competitive public religious environment advertising one's involvement with Theos Hypsistos did little to contribute to personal or familial status.

Another possible reason for the comparative smallness of dedications to Theos Hypsistos is that as worshippers attempted to conceive of a highest god they became aware of their humble position in such a relationship and responded with appropriate humility and awe.⁷³ I have said above that awe and humility before god and gods was not a new thing, but had been part of the story of divine-human relationships for ages past. However, I identify in the study of the new religious situation and new types of cults present in this situation that the attributes of awe and humility were part of the transition to monotheism. Awe and humility are evident in the confession practices, in the devotion to the *angeloi* and the *theion*. They are also a feature of the divine-human relationship in Judaism and Christianity.

I would suggest that it was not an intentional act of worshippers to produce a small dedication, seemingly insignificant in the highly competitive cultic environment of Asia Minor in the imperial era. Rather, modest dedications were by-products of the type of relationship between Theos Hypsistos and human beings, no specific emphasis

⁷³ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 179 reflects on the idea of humility before a highest divinity.

intended. It was not necessary to offer the highest god bigger and better, or more expensive honours, because worshippers conceived this god as greatest, and greatest alone. As shown in the Oinoanda oracle and in other examples of attitude toward god expressed through philosophical ideas, this god was removed entirely from the human world.

A more regular style of pagan dedication is found in a limited number of Theos Hypsistos inscriptions. These record larger offerings. A late example comes from Kotiaieion in Phrygia from a family who dedicated columns and a propylon to a sanctuary:

ἔτους τφγ'	<i>in the year 308-9</i>
Αὐρ. Ἀλέξαν-	<i>Aurelios Alexandros</i>
δρος Τιμο-	<i>son of Timotheos</i>
θέου καὶ ἡ	
σύνβιος αὐ-	<i>and his wife</i>
τοῦ Αὐρ. Ἀμμι-	<i>Aurelia Ammia</i>
α εὐξάμενοι	<i>praying to</i>
θεῶ ὑψίστω	<i>Theos Hypsistos</i>
εὐχὴν σὺν	<i>made a prayer with</i>
τοῖς τέκνοις	<i>their children</i>
αὐτῶν Ἀττι-	<i>Attikos</i>
κὸς κὲ Ἀρτέμων	<i>and Artemon</i>
κὲ Τιμόθεος κὲ Ἀλέ-	<i>and Timotheos and</i>
ξανδρος κὲ Πλάτων	<i>Alexandros and Platon</i>
ἀνέστησαν τοὺς κίονας σὺν τῷ προ-	<i>set up the small pillars</i>
πύλῳ ⁷⁴	<i>together</i>
	<i>with the gateway</i>
	<i>(propylon)</i>

The short lines of the text indicate it is likely inscribed on one of the pillars itself. Whilst it is an unusual dedication in the Theos Hypsistos corpus due to its prominent position at the gateway to the temple, and obvious cost, it does show that family groups were part of the worship

⁷⁴ Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue no. 215; Drew Bear and Naour, *ANRW* 2.18.3 2041-3 no. 6; *SEG* 40 (1990) 1251. From the year 308-9 CE.

of Theos Hypsistos. Although dedications to Theos Hypsistos might be oriented toward an individual's search for relationship with god, texts such as this suggest the cult was also within the circumference of mainstream paganism. In this context family groups and cult worship went together.

A small minority of dedications included prayers for rulers.⁷⁵ From the city of Amastris in Paphlagonia has been found an early (45 CE) dedication which was physically situated opposite a large monumental dedication to the emperor Claudius:

θεῶι ὑψίστῳι	<i>to Theos Hypsistos</i>
ἐπηκό[ω]ι Ἡλ[ιος]	<i>Helios having given an ear to (the god)</i>
εὐ[ξάμενος] ⁷⁶	<i>made a prayer</i>

--

This short rock cut inscription was carved on a base supporting a column. On top of the column is an eagle.⁷⁷ It is set alongside another inscription for the imperial peace honouring Claudius by the prefect Gaius Iulius Aquila. The significance of such an early imperial text in Asia Minor, even if set up in an uncharacteristically prominent position, is that it either preceded or was concurrent with the early Christian movement in that area. It means that the highest god cult which grew out of the religious situation I have been describing was part of the same environment as the new *ekklesia* was emerging into. It means that highest god cults were not just a response to a Christian

⁷⁵ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 177. These two early texts are dated to the first part of the first century from Thrace, for the benefit of the royal family. The first is to Zeus Hypsistos, Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue no. 60; *SEG* 38 (1987), 597 no. 3, from 36-8 CE. The second is to Theos Hypsistos, Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue no. 68; *IGR* 1.777 from 25 CE: θεῶι ἁγίῳι ὑψίστῳι | ὑπὲρ τῆς Ῥοιμη|τάλκου καὶ Πυθο|δώριδος ἐκ τῶν κα|τὰ τὸν Κοιλα[λ]ητικὸν | πόλεμον κινδύνου | σωτηρίας εὐξάμενος | καὶ ἐπιτυχῶν Γάιος | Ἰούλιος Πρόκ[λ]ος χαρι|στ[ήρι]ον – *Gaius Julius Proklos prayed thanksgiving to the holy Theos Hypsistos for salvation from danger from anyone throughout the Koilaletikos battle on behalf of Roimetalkos and Pythodoridi.*

⁷⁶ Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue no. 195.

⁷⁷ Whilst the eagle has been noted as a symbol used in some dedications to Zeus Hypsistos, in this instance it is likely to reflect the status of Claudius as emperor of Rome, to which the dedication opposite the text is offered.

or Jewish precedent in that part of the world.⁷⁸ Examples such as this indicate that pagan cults of Theos Hypsistos arose alongside Jewish and Christian influence as distinct cultic expressions. Shared religious and theological views found currency within a cultural environment in which monotheistic cultic expressions developed.

7.6 Theos Hypsistos in relationship to other pagan gods

Sometimes Theos Hypsistos is found in relationship to other deities (not just as the name of a god with *hypsistos* as a qualifying epithet, as discussed above). An example of a stele from Saittai in Lydia with a relief of the indigenous Thea Larmēnē was dedicated to Theos Hypsistos and a μεγά θεῖον, *mega theion*, the great divinity.

θεῶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ μεγ[ά]λῳ θεῖῳ ἐπιφανεῖ Δημὸ θυγάτηρ Τυράννου
θεῶν Λαρμηνην ἀνέστησεν⁷⁹

*Dema daughter of Tyrannos presenting herself to Theos
Hypsistos and the Great Divinity set up (this statue of) Thea
Larmēnē*

This interesting dedication combines a devotion to Theos Hypsistos with another abstraction, the *mega theion*, within the context of a female indigenous deity. Thea Larmēnē was a local mother cult. In this instance, the great mother deity in a local context was invested with the abstract title θεά, god. A focus of honouring female gods continued in Oinoanda where Artemis and Leto were found in votive texts alongside Theos Hypsistos. The site was in a worship place of Theos

⁷⁸ Early, pre-common era references to Theos Hypsistos may be seen from outside of Asia. They might better be described as examples of henotheistic exaltation, as has been previously described.

⁷⁹ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 180. Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue no. 172 = TAMV.1 186 from the third century CE.

Hypsistos near to where the theological oracle to be discussed in the next chapter was found.⁸⁰

From Nysa in Lykia in the second century CE comes an unusual text associating Theos Hypsistos with a mountain mother god and all the gods, female and male:

[--Δι]ονύσιος Διο-	<i>Dionysios [son of Dionysios?]</i>
[-] Διογένους Λυ-	<i>Diogenes of Lykia</i>
[-η]ς θεῶ ὑψίς-	<i>to Theos Hypsistos</i>
[τω καὶ Μητρ]ῆ Ὀρείᾳ καὶ Κε	<i>and the Mountain Mother</i>
[--] καὶ θεοῖς πᾶσι	<i>according to a command⁸¹ to all the gods,</i>
[καὶ θεᾶ]ς πάσαις χαρισ-	<i>male and female</i>
[τ]ήριον. ⁸²	<i>a thank offering.</i>

Whilst this inscription is broken and requires some flexibility in reconstruction due to its condition, it is possible to interpret it as referring to a pantheon of which the deity named Theos Hypsistos was a part. Interpreting Theos Hypsistos as a member of a pantheon of gods supports Belyache's position that the title Theos Hypsistos could refer to any god, depending on the circumstances for the worshipper.⁸³ Accordingly, the occurrence of Theos Hypsistos known as one god

⁸⁰ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 180-81, catalogue no. A59, with reference to Nicholas Milner's 2008 report on Oinoanda. The connection here between Theos Hypsistos and these two female gods is according to Mitchell, 182, due to the long-standing tradition of worshipping powerful female gods in Anatolia, and that acknowledging the female divinity within the highest god cult was "readily intelligible." For evidence of the Anatolian Leto at Oinoanda, see A. S. Hall, "A Sanctuary of Leto at Oenoanda," *AS* 27 (1977): 193-7.

⁸¹ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cults of Theos Hypsistos," 182 suggests a reconstruction of the καὶ Κε... of lines 2-3 as κα[τὰ] κέλ[ευσιν] *according to a command*, which is a formula drawn from confessional practices. I accept this reconstruction as likely. This is a revision from his earlier setting out of the text in his 1999 study in which he made the textual interpretation given here without drawing the reader's attention to the poor state of the stone.

⁸² *TAM* II.3.737; Mitchell, "The cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue no. 232.

⁸³ Belyache, "Hypsistos: une voie;" and challenging ideas of one particular god being high over others within what she understands as a solely polytheistic religious environment, see Belyache, "*Angeloi*." See also Ustinova, "Thiasoi of Theos Hypsistos," 165, who denies there was ever a single cult of Theos Hypsistos, but that the phenomenon was local, applied to local gods who were elevated to a status of highest.

within a pantheon must take its place in analysis of the evidence.⁸⁴ In some circumstances, it is correct to see that Theos Hypsistos appeared as one among many, particularly when *hypsistos* was applied to a divinity in context of others, such as the dedication above.

In support of Theos Hypsistos being a name given to honour another pagan god is an inscription from Amastris in Paphlagonia.:

θεῶ ὑψίστω	<i>To Theos Hypsistos</i>
ὀμφῆ ἄκερ – σεκόμου βῶ – μον θεοῦ ὑψίς –	<i>at the voice of the long-haired god the altar (has been set up) to</i>
τοιο, ὃς κατὰ πάντων ἔστι καὶ οὐ βλέπε –	<i>the highest, who is over</i>
ται, εἰσοράα δὲ	<i>everything and is not seen,</i>
δείμαθ' ὅπως	<i>who sees that he wards</i>
ἀπαλάλκηται βροτολοιγέ – α θνητῶν ⁸⁵	<i>off the terrible plagues of mortals.</i>

One interpretation of this text would be that Apollo is the highest god.⁸⁶ One of Apollo's features is being long-haired.⁸⁷ Whilst this description of Apollo is found in literature, it is less common in epigraphy.⁸⁸ Apollo's unifying characteristics include being an averter

⁸⁴ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 181, referring to only ten out of 250 texts does not think Theos Hypsistos belonged to a pantheon, based on the limited number of dedications in which Theos Hypsistos is mentioned in association with other gods. Also 183, concluding: "Although accommodation with other beliefs and practices was not excluded, the whole evidence does not suggest that Theos Hypsistos, whether we understand the cult as unified or disaggregated, was normally conceived as being integrated into the wider pantheon of deities."

⁸⁵ *SEG* 50 (2000) 1225; Christian Marek, "Der Höchste, Beste, Größte, Allmächtige Gott: Inschriften aus Nordkleinasien," *EA* 32 (2000): 135-7.

⁸⁶ Marek, "Der Höchste, Beste, Größte, Allmächtige Gott," 135 and n. 24.

⁸⁷ *Iliad* 20.39 – ἄκερσεκόμης, long-haired, is applied as an epithet to Phoibos. Cook, *Zeus*, 500 say Phoibos was the original name of Apollo.

⁸⁸ Marek, "Der Höchste, Beste, Größte, Allmächtige Gott," 135-36.

of sickness and plague and delivering prophecy.⁸⁹ Another interpretation is that the inscription was set up to Theos Hypsistos by the instruction of the oracular Apollo.⁹⁰ In either interpretation, a pantheon is implicit.

Another dedication from the second to third centuries CE to Theos Hypsistos occurs alongside Mēn Ouranios, from Andeda in Pisidia:

Κόιντος Νουμέρι-	<i>Kointos Noumerios</i>
ος ἱερεὺς	<i>priest</i>
Μηνὸς Ο[ὐ]ρανίου κα-	<i>of Mēn Ouranios</i>
τὰ χρημα-	<i>according to an oracular</i>
τισμὸν ἀνέ-	<i>response set (this)</i>
θηκε θεῶ	<i>up to Theos</i>
ύψίστω ⁹¹	<i>Hypsistos</i>

The indigenous Anatolian god Mēn was frequently found in the context of divine justice and the confessional practices of Lydia and Phrygia. It is not surprising to find references to Theos Hypsistos alongside these⁹² given the monotheistic attitudes expressed in many texts associated with confession, justice and vengeance naming Mēn.⁹³ Belayche thinks this inscription naming Theos Hypsistos qualifies Mēn at Andeda and is evidence that Theos Hypsistos is being used as an acclamation of superiority within one context, and not in a monotheistic sense.⁹⁴

I suggest that in this text it is unlikely that Mēn is being referred to as the highest god. As discussed previously, Mēn's role in pagan monotheistic-type activities can convey the δυνάμεις, the powers, of a

⁸⁹ See Chapter Eight on the discussion of the various functions of Apollo.

⁹⁰ Marek, "Der Höchste, Beste, Größte, Allmächtige Gott," 136.

⁹¹ G. Bean, *AS 10* (1960): 65 no. 115; *CMRDM*, 1.129.

⁹² Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 181, 184 affirms this.

⁹³ See Chapter Five section 6.6 on divine justice and the role of indigenous gods.

⁹⁴ Belayche, "*Deus deum*," 163-4.

highest god in a mediatorial way.⁹⁵ I have not come across any definite reference to Mēn as the superior god, as Theos Hypsistos. The fact that the response is κατὰ χρηματισμὸν, according to an oracular response, in the context of Mēn, more likely places this text within the environment of confessional response.

An inscription from Philadelphia in Lydia from the second century CE connects Theos Hypsistos with the indigenous divinities associated with justice, Hosios and Dikaios:

Θεῶ Ὀσίῳ καὶ Δικαίῳ	<i>to the god Hosios and Dikaios</i>
Μελτίνη εὐξαμένη ὑπ –	<i>Meltine made a prayer</i>
ἐρ Γλαύκου τοῦ συνβίου	<i>on behalf of Glaukon her</i>
	<i>husband</i>
εὐχαριστοῦσα ἀπέδωκα	<i>having given thanks she</i>
	<i>rendered</i>
τὴν εὐχὴν. ἔτους τκζ'	<i>the prayer. In the year τκζ'</i>
μηνὸς Ξανδίκου η'	<i>in the month Xandikos.</i>

This inscription reveals the connection with Theos Hypsistos in a mistake evident in which the stonecutter began to carve the letters ΥΨΙΣ under ΟΣΙΩ. That person must have intended to write ὑψίστω, perhaps out of custom in this instance.⁹⁷

In addition to other named gods such as these mentioned above, Theos Hypsistos was found alongside abstractly named entities. These included *angeloi*, the *theion* and the combinations discussed in the previous chapter from Stratonikeia in Karia. These, in addition to the figures representing divine justice, affirm Theos Hypsistos was found in the context of the indigenous gods of Anatolia.⁹⁸ As will be discussed

⁹⁵ The example from Ricl, “Hosios kai Dikaios. Premiere Parte,” 13-14 no. 25 Face B, referred to in Chapter Six section 6.6 is an example of Mēn in the company of other gods in a role where he conveys the power of a superior divinity.

⁹⁶ TAMV.33 1637; Malay, *I.Manisa Museum*, 181; Mitchell, “Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos,” catalogue no. A48.

⁹⁷ Belayche, “*Deus deum*,” 153 n. 77 on the confusion of the ‘lapicide,’ and referring to others.

⁹⁸ Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 102.

below, there were connections between the pagan cult of Theos Hypsistos and Judaism, through assimilating edges. The situation of Theos Hypsistos in the context of indigenous rural gods and with Judaism, places followers of Theos Hypsistos among minority groups. Followers were to be found in city and country alike,⁹⁹ with public and private cult practices and places.

7.7 The assimilation of Theos Hypsistos between pagans and Jews

Worship of a highest god was not only a feature of pagan monotheism. Christians infrequently named god as ὑψίστος, placing the term in the margins of Christian tradition.¹⁰⁰ Seven of the nine references in the New Testament are from Luke-Acts.¹⁰¹ The first three references from Luke occur in the first chapter, at the foretelling of the birth of Jesus. They are used in a liturgical context. From chapter six of Luke, Jesus uses the term *hypsistos* in his teaching on right behaviour, encouraging his followers to aim to be υἱοὶ ὑψίστου. In chapter eight the Gerasene demoniac compares Jesus to the highest god. The same episode is reported in Mark chapter five. The Hebrews reference connects the priest Melchisedek with his highest god. This verse is directly related to Genesis 14.18-20. The reference is to the Jewish god. From Acts chapter seven Stephen reporting on the salvation history of the Jewish people, which the Christians inherited, says that the highest god does not dwell in human made habitats, such as the temple Solomon made. And from chapter sixteen of Acts a slave girl with a πνεῦμα πύθωνα, a spirit of divination, identifies Paul and his companions as slaves of the highest god. Of all the references to god in

⁹⁹ Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 125-6.

¹⁰⁰ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Vol. 8, 619-20: "ὑψίστος does not correspond to the NT revelation of God no matter whether it be understood as a solemn liturgico-hymnal expression of sublimity, a religious philosophico-theological term to denote transcendence, or a traditional proper name for God."

¹⁰¹ Luke 1.32, 35, 76, 6.35, 8.28; Acts 7.48, 16.17; Mark 5.7; Heb 7.1.

the New Testament, the name of *hypsistos* is comparatively rare. This may be because, as Trebilco says, as pagan use of *hypsistos* increased, Jewish use declined.¹⁰²

Jews worshipped their god as Theos Hypsistos. In Asia Minor, evidence of this is found in epigraphical references which reflect Jewish iconography or distinct Jewish practices. The use of Theos Hypsistos as a literary term in the Septuagint and Jewish writings of the Hellenistic and imperial period confirm this. This evidence is discussed below.

Judaism potentially influenced the appropriation of the title Theos Hypsistos to a pagan god. It suggests that assimilating processes were at work through pagan and Jewish cultural groups. To what degree pagans and Jews considered ‘their’ Theos Hypsistos to be the same as each other’s is difficult to ascertain. It is here that study of the phenomenon of the θεοσεβεῖς, ‘god-worshippers,’ to be discussed is helpful. Scholarship and commentary since the patristic era which has focussed on a perceived pathway toward the dominance of Christianity has exacerbated the lack of clarity in this area. In this process, the distinctiveness of both Judaism and monotheistic paganism has been marginalised.

The designation Theos Hypsistos to the Jewish god features prominently in the Septuagint¹⁰³ and in Jewish literature written in the Greek language in the late Hellenistic and imperial periods.¹⁰⁴ The word ὕψιστος always refers to the Jewish god Yahweh in these writings.¹⁰⁵ *Hypsistos* therefore did belong to Jewish tradition, even if

¹⁰² Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 143-4.

¹⁰³ Over 110 times in the Septuagint, mostly in Psalms. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 129.

¹⁰⁴ Mitchell, “Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 186; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 127.

¹⁰⁵ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 129 – the most common usage is ὁ ὕψιστος followed by ὁ θεὸς ὁ ὕψιστος, where the article, and the repetition of the article is used to emphasise the name.

not exclusively. I have not been able to find any discussion about whether the Jewish use of Theos Hypsistos was influenced by pagans. It seems unlikely, given that Theos Hypsistos was already a term of exaltation known in the Jewish scriptures, and that this predated pagan use of the term.

Judaism in Asia Minor in the centuries here discussed was diverse in expression and exhibited acculturating and integrative practices with the dominant Hellenistic culture. As said previously, as pagan use of the term increased, Jewish use decreased, to avoid confusion of the Jewish god with pagan gods.¹⁰⁶

There are several inscriptions naming Theos Hypsistos which have been identified as Jewish. These come from Gorgippia, Pantikapaion, Akmonia, Sibidunda, Negev, Alexandria and Athribis.¹⁰⁷ A further group are associated with Jews through the provenance of the inscription within a known Jewish community.¹⁰⁸ There is only one of this group from Asia Minor, and Mitchell's assignation as Jewish is not universally accepted.¹⁰⁹

It is not always clear whether a dedication to Theos Hypsistos refers to a pagan god or to the Jewish god. Trebilco, being aware the frequency of the term *hypsistos* in pagan context, looks closely for other identifying cultural signs in a Theos Hypsistos inscription to determine if it is Jewish.¹¹⁰ Any reference to Zeus would rule out a *hypsistos*

¹⁰⁶ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 143-44.

¹⁰⁷ Mitchell, "The cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue nos. 84-8, 207, 230, 281-82, 285 = *IJO* I, BS 20-22, 27; *IJO* I BS 4; *IJO* 176; *IJO* 215.

¹⁰⁸ From Delos, Rheneia, Akmonia, Leontopolis, Egypt: Mitchell, "The cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue nos. 106-110, 206, 288; Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue A76.

¹⁰⁹ Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 186 n. 75 referring to "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue no. 206 from Akmonia = *SEG* 26/7 (1976/7) 1355 from the second to third centuries CE. Not accepted by Ameling in *IJO*. See comment in *IJO* 176. Apart from the fact that a Jewish community was at Akmonia, there is little else to associate it with a Jewish use of Theos Hypsistos: Ἐβικητος | ἐπι[υησε]ν θεῷ | ὑψίστῳ | εὐχίην – *Ebiktetos made a prayer to Theos Hypsistos*.

¹¹⁰ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 133.

dedication as being Jewish. As discussed in the assimilation of Jews in Akmonia, images associated with a dedication are not always helpful in assigning provenance. As Jewish groups in the period discussed here did not have their own distinctive decorative styles,¹¹¹ pagan iconography cannot be used to determine if an inscription is Jewish.

It may be impossible to determine from which cultural group the dedication belongs. Up to 178 inscriptions naming Theos Hypsistos cannot be identified as either pagan or Jewish, or influenced by Judaism.¹¹² This implies that religious language from different cultural groups converged around ideas of a highest god, that there was shared vocabulary evident in the texts. I propose that assimilation occurred between Jews and pagans in the use of religious vocabulary concerning one god.

An example of an inscription which can be confidently categorised as Jewish comes from Akmonia in Phrygia.¹¹³ As set out in Chapter Two, this inscription is classed as Jewish through reference to the ἀράς δρέπανον, the sickle curse.¹¹⁴

Certain words which had currency in Jewish writing can help identify a Theos Hypsistos inscription as Jewish. The word καταφυγή, refuge, used of god in the context of Theos Hypsistos is also found in the Septuagint¹¹⁵ and not in pagan texts.¹¹⁶ A second century CE

¹¹¹ Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity*, 23.

¹¹² Mitchell, "Further thoughts on the cult of Theos Hypsistos," 186-7.

¹¹³ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 135; *CIG* 769; Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue no. 207. From the third century CE: [ἐὰν δέ τις ἕτερον σῶμα εἰσενέγκῃ ἔσ]ται αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν τὸν ὕψιστον καὶ τὸ ἀράς δρέπανον εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ [εἰσέλθοιτο καὶ μηδένα ἐγκαταλείψαντο] - [*And should someone enter another body*] *that one will reckon with the highest god and may the sickle curse enter into his house [and leave no one behind]*

¹¹⁴ See discussion in Chapter Two section 2.8.4 on biblical cursing on epitaphs in Akmonia.

¹¹⁵ Especially in the Psalms.

¹¹⁶ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 136.

inscription from Sibidunda in Pisidia can be categorised as Jewish through this connection:

θεῶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ	<i>to the holy refuge</i>
ἀγεία καταφυγῆ	<i>Theos Hypsistos</i>
Ἄρτιμᾶς υἱὸς Ἄρ-	<i>Artimas son of</i>
τίμου Μομμίου	<i>Artimas Mommios</i>
καὶ [Μ]αρκίας ὁ αὐ-	<i>and Markias the same</i>
τὸς κτίστης ἀ-	<i>founder</i>
νέστησεν καὶ	<i>also set up</i>
τὸν θυμιατισ-	<i>the incense vessel</i>
τήρ(ι)ον καὶ κέον(α)	<i>and resting place</i>
ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων ¹¹⁷	<i>out of their own means</i>

Trebilco understands the ἀγία καταφυγή as an attributive qualification of Theos Hypsistos. I note that despite Trebilco's confidence that καταφυγή is not found in pagan texts, it is possible here to interpret the text as referring to two separate deities, Theos Hypsistos and Holy Refuge.¹¹⁸ If this was the case, it would make it unlikely the dedication was Jewish.

Other indicators of a Theos Hypsistos inscription being Jewish include the use of the definite article ὁ with θεὸς ὑψιστος.¹¹⁹ The addition of

¹¹⁷ *IJO* 215; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 136; *SEG* 19.852; Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue no. 230; G. Bean, *Anatolian Studies* 10 (1960): 70 no. 122.

¹¹⁸ Perhaps in the way that some pagan dedications were to a pair of gods; ie., Hosios and Dikaïos, Artemis and Leto. However, there is no known evidence of a god named Holy Refuge to support my proposition.

¹¹⁹ According to Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 137, who refers to Stephen Mitchell, *RECAM II. The Ankara District. The Inscriptions of North Galatia*, British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara Monograph 4 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports International Series 135), no. 209B. Ameling, *IJO*, 335 suggests there was interchange of the name Theos Hypsistos between Jews and pagan followers of a highest god in Galatia. *SEG* 31 (1981) 1080; Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," catalogue no. 202: τῷ μεγάλῳ | θεῶ ὑψίστῳ καὶ | ἐπουρανίῳ καὶ | τοῖς ἀγίοις αὐτοῦ | ἀγγέλοις καὶ τῇ | προσκυνητῇ αὐ|τοῦ προσευχῆ τὰ | ὧδε ἔργα γέινεται – *to the great and celestial Theos Hypsistos and his holy angeloi worshipping him with prayer the works here have taken place*. And from the Greek island of Rheneia, *Ditt. Syll.*³ 3.1181 dated c.100 BCE, ὁ θεὸς ὁ ὑψιστος is invoked in a vengeance prayer. The repetition of the article here is intended to emphasise the subject, thus the highest of gods.

the article to θεὸς ὕψιστος occurs frequently in the Septuagint.¹²⁰ The title ὕψιστος always refers to god in the Septuagint.¹²¹ Whilst the use of the article might be an identifying feature of a Jewish reference to Theos Hypsistos in literature, epigraphy is a different category of text, and the same patterns do not necessarily apply. Stone cutting space is an obvious factor.

Other words such as ἐπουράνιος, celestial, and προσευχή, a place of prayer, παντοκράτωρ, almighty, and εὐλογητός, blessed, are found in specifically Jewish (and sometimes Christian) contexts. A Jewish manumission document from Gorgippia in the Bosporan kingdom makes use of παντοκράτωρ and εὐλογητός with the Jewish meaning of honouring the blessed almighty god most high, while the oath formula invoking Zeus, Gaia and Helios is commonly pagan.¹²² It is probable that the Jews making manumissions were required to conform to pagan formulae for legal reasons.¹²³ It therefore appears that manumissions took place in προσευχαί, places of prayer. This example, whilst geographically remote from Asia Minor, is important in highlighting the cultural assimilation that took place between groups living together, where Theos Hypsistos was named specifically as the Jewish god, even within the context of a legal mainstream Hellenistic process. This is part of the integration aspect of assimilation, where minority groups engaged with the formal structures of society. Jewish identity is not compromised in this environment. Rather its

¹²⁰ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 137.

¹²¹ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 8, 617.

¹²² Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 136. *CIRB* 1123 from Gorgippia in 41 CE: θεῶι ὑψίστῳ παντο - | κράτορι εὐλογητῶ, βα - | σιλεύοντος βασιλέ - | ως Μιθριδάτου φιλο - | ΓΕΡΜΑΚΟΥ ? {φιλογερμα<νί>κου} Latyshev καὶ φιλοπάτ - | ριδος ἔτους ηλτ' μη - | νὸς Δείου, Πόθος Στ - | ράβωνος ἀνέθηκεν | τ[ῆι] προσευχῆι κατ' εὐχ[ῆ] - | ν θ[ρ]επτήν ἑαυτοῦ, ἧ ὄνο - | μα Χ[ρ]ύσα, ἐφ' ὧν ἡ ἀνέπα - | φος καὶ ἀνεπηρέαστο[ς] | ἀπὸ παντὸς κληρον[όμ] - | ου ὑπὸ Δία, Γῆν, Ἥλιο[ν] - *To the almighty blessed Theos Hypsistos in the reign of king Mithridates loyalist of Germanicus and patriot in the year 338 of the month Deios, Pothos son of Strabonos set this up in a place of prayer according to a vow for his own reared slave, who is named Chrusa, for which to her shall be rights untouched and unmolested as from every will under Zeus, Gē, Helios.*

¹²³ Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, Vol. 3, 37.

distinctiveness is made more so through its careful alignment with a pagan rite.

7.7.1 The use of ‘syncretism’ between pagans and Jews and its subsequent impact

The *hypsistos* epithet gave rise to a tendency in early modern scholarship of Jews in Asia Minor to ascribe as syncretism what I understand as wider cultural processes of assimilation.¹²⁴ The term syncretism does not address the nuances of interaction and distinction that occur as different groups move together, acquire mutual and new practices through acculturation, react, and emerge. Throughout this thesis, I describe these nuances as assimilative process. Syncretism does not belong to assimilation theory. Syncretism, especially in earlier modern scholarship, is applied negatively. In this section, I dismantle syncretism as it is applied to religious practices which resembled some aspects of Judaism that were current in Asia Minor.

Theories of syncretism have influenced the way the interactions between Jews and pagans have been subsequently perceived. A significant early proponent of the theory of syncretism was Franz Cumont.¹²⁵ Cumont, a late nineteenth to early twentieth century scholar, contributed greatly to our understanding of religious communities in the ancient world. His theories form a basepoint from which other directions in studies of the cultural interactions between Jews and pagans have developed. In 1906 Cumont wrote that dispersed Jews in Asia Minor gave up their traditions to mix in with

¹²⁴ The *Macquarie Australian Dictionary* describes syncretism as: “the attempted reconciliation or union of different or opposing principles, practices, or parties, as in philosophy or religion.”

¹²⁵ As expressed in Franz Cumont, “Les mystères de Sabazius et le judaïsme,” *CRAIBL* (1906): 63-79; “Hypsistos. Supplément à la Revue de l’instruction publique en Belgique (1897); “A propos de Sabazius et du judaïsme,” *Musée Belge* 11 (1910): 55-60. He also published and taught syncretic theory on the Iranian Mithra and syncretism into the Mithraism of Roman religion.

the Hellenistic communities in which they lived.¹²⁶ He assessed the pagan societies in which the Jews lived to be idolatrous, according to his own perspective of triumphant Christianity. A result of interaction with pagans was ‘impurity’ within Judaism. At the same time, these pagans were attracted to the monotheistic practices of Judaism, creating what Cumont calls, “Judaeo-pagan” cults.¹²⁷ Cumont did not accept an independent pagan movement toward monotheism, but believed that pagans began worshipping the god of the Jewish bible.¹²⁸ Cumont then wrote in 1910 that Jewish worship was corrupted to include Jupiter Sabazios, and he questioned the seriousness with which the Jews worshipped the god of Israel.¹²⁹ He did qualify that this critique referred not to the orthodox Jews, but to those whom he suggested indulged in worship of a Jewish-pagan mix of deity which began in the Hellenistic period.¹³⁰

A syncretistic understanding of Jewish interaction with other groups sees the foundations of Judaism ‘mixed up’ with aspects of paganism. It means for example, that *hypsistos* applied to Zeus happened only via Jewish influence, and dedicators must have really been referring to the Jewish god.¹³¹ It blurs the lines between Jews worshipping only the Jewish god or perhaps syncretising a pagan god to the same position of the Jewish god, investing the pagan god with all the attributes of the Jewish god.¹³² It is not difficult to then make a mental transition to Jews worshipping any god who happened to be called *hypsistos*. This

¹²⁶ Cumont, “Les mystères de Sabazius et le judaïsme,” 64.

¹²⁷ Cumont, “Les mystères de Sabazius et le judaïsme,” 64: “Il se forma ainsi en Asie Mineure une série de cultes judéo-païens.”

¹²⁸ Cumont, “Les mystères de Sabazius et le judaïsme,” 65-7.

¹²⁹ Cumont, “A propos de Sabazius e du judaïsme,” 58-9. Cumont, “Les mystères de Sabazius et le judaïsme,” 70 identifies Sabazios with the Jewish god.

¹³⁰ Cumont, “A propose de Sabazius et du judaïsme,” 60.

¹³¹ As Cumont, “Hypsistos.” See also commentary in Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 131.

¹³² Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 240 n. 19 says there is no positive evidence in Asia Minor that Jews worshipped a pagan god.

assumption discredits the integrity of Judaism as witnessed in the evidence described in this chapter and throughout this thesis.

Trebilco assessed Cumont's syncretism theory against the evidence for Theos Hypsistos in Asia Minor and determined that Judaism was not syncretistic and not "compromised by paganism."¹³³ Judaism did influence some usages of *hypsistos* in pagan contexts, but it was not exclusive influence, and it is difficult to prove. In the space that I call the assimilating edges between Jews and pagans, where the practices of acculturation and integration happened (see Fig. 2, yellow zone), there was a shared vocabulary.¹³⁴ The name Theos Hypsistos was part of the shared vocabulary. This sharing did not infer that one group had greater influence over another. Neither did it mean that a pagan hearing the name Theos Hypsistos would identify it with the Jewish god. Only those pagans involved in the life of the Jewish synagogue would likely connect the term and its subject.

Assimilating processes certainly changed the face of Judaism in Asia Minor, made it open to wider cultural influences. However, its fundamental integrity as a limited monotheistic religion, based on the first commandment, did not change through the centuries studied in this thesis. The assimilation that took place between Judaism, other minority groups, and mainstream Hellenistic culture was active especially in the boundary spaces between groups. Diversity of Jewish practices in Asia Minor was apparent, but syncretism does not define these practices.

Later examples of scholarship have applied syncretism as a generalisation of Jewish/pagan religious expression in Asia Minor.¹³⁵

¹³³ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 142.

¹³⁴ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 143: "The most important fact is that the frontier existed (between Jews and pagans), so that in an albeit limited number of cases, Jews and pagans shared the same religious vocabulary."

¹³⁵ Eg., Clinton Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996).

Parke describes the respectful attitude towards the Jewish god evident in some oracle responses from Didyma as syncretism between Jews and pagans.¹³⁶ Reynolds and Tannenbaum also describe as syncretism some expressions of Judaism in Asia Minor. These scholars take up terms as “adoption” and “absorption” to describe what was happening between eastern religions and the Hellenistic cultural mainstream.¹³⁷ These phrases overlook the subtle processes that were happening between different groups as new religions made their mark in an environment which was open to things new.

Syncretism as an umbrella term for assimilative diversity of religious expression is unappreciative of assimilation as positive innovation.¹³⁸ “Pure” Judaism is often represented as a superior type of religion to paganism, unsusceptible to any adaptation to the wider culture.¹³⁹

In the new and developing religious situation in Asia Minor, with the influence of the individual and the presence of minority groups within a Greek cultural mainstream, cultic pagan monotheism evolved independently of Judaism. In some cases of pagan monotheism studied throughout this thesis there are resemblances to Judaism. The presence of synagogues and pagan worship spaces as places where people met opens the possibility that there was dialogue between the theological positions of Judaism and pagan monotheism. The processes of assimilation make the possibility of dialogue more likely.

¹³⁶ Parke, *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor*, 105. This he says, affected Didyma in the later period of its functioning.

¹³⁷ Joyce Reynolds and Robert Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers at Aphrodisias: Greek Inscriptions with Commentary*, Texts from the Excavations at Aphrodisias conducted by Kenan T. Erim, The Cambridge Philological Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 88.

¹³⁸ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 88: refer to the “exception of obscure syncretist groups like the Hypsistarii of Asia Minor and Tanais, who are most probably Greeks inventing a congenial adaptation of Judaism, doubtless with no encouragement from the Jews.”

¹³⁹ The expression of this perspective by Reynolds and Tannenbaum runs counter to the conclusions of their study on the *theosebeis* (god-worshippers) of Aphrodisias. (See section below.) Here it will be seen that the *theosebeis* are themselves an example of an assimilating cultural group.

I suggest that the diversity of evidence of *hypsistos* in the setting of different cultural groups means *hypsistos* did not only belong to Jewish tradition. Evidence of *hypsistos* worship has been found throughout the Roman Empire.¹⁴⁰ In Asia Minor evidence is dense in local pagan cults in Lydia and Phrygia. These were places where public confession and *angeloi* worship also occurred. I identify through this study that the practices associated with public confession and *angeloi* worship were characteristic of pagan monotheism. It is thereby natural that one god would be exalted as highest within this same environment. The popularity of abstract titles for gods in these regions leads Trebilco to say that it is this which drives the use of Theos Hypsistos and the *hypsistos* epithet rather than Jewish influence.¹⁴¹ The findings of the research presented in this thesis contained here agrees with this position.

7.8 The *theosebeis* and god-fearers

There were groups of people known in inscriptional and literary evidence who were connected to the Jewish community, particularly through the synagogue, who followed some Jewish practices, but who were not Jews.¹⁴² These were known as θεοσεβῆς, *theosebeis*. The *theosebeis* were open to Jewish piety and duly influenced in conduct and religious activity. A θεοσεβής is literally someone who worships god, a ‘god-worshipper,’ from θεός (god) and σέβω (worship).¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ See maps describing the spread of *hypsistos* evidence in Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 82-5.

¹⁴¹ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 133.

¹⁴² See discussion in Collar, *Religious Networks*, 235ff.

¹⁴³ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, volume 3, 124 says the word θεοσεβεία is used to denote religious service, or fear of a god. It is described as an active religious process, rather than an inner attitude. It is a narrower concept than the more common εὐσεβεία, piety or reverence toward the gods.

There were *theosebeis* involved in the synagogues at Pantikapaion, Tralles, Sardis, Lydian Philadelphia¹⁴⁴ and Aphrodisias.¹⁴⁵ In the context of Theos Hypsistos evidence, a person making a dedication to Theos Hypsistos who had contact with a Jewish community, but who was not Jewish, might be known as such a god-worshipper.¹⁴⁶

Theosebeis are usually referred to in scholarship as ‘god-fearers’ or Jewish sympathisers.¹⁴⁷ I will avoid the term ‘sympathiser’ in this study. The term carries modern connotations of weakness which have detracted from the vitality and independence of the *theosebeis* as a unique cultural minority group within the mainstream of Asia Minor. The *theosebeis* had advantages of cross cultural edges of inclusion in both pagan and Jewish life.

Evidence of the use of the term θεοσεβής does not necessarily indicate involvement with the Jewish community however. Pagan examples are documented, and although not common are still noteworthy.¹⁴⁸

θεοσεβής was not only a Jewish term used of people who had interests in the Jewish religion but who were unlike themselves in other cultural areas.¹⁴⁹ The meaning of the word θεοσεβής, following the example of non-Jewish occurrences of the term, can simply be

¹⁴⁴ Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 118.

¹⁴⁵ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*.

¹⁴⁶ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 138.

¹⁴⁷ For example, Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 96; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 138; L. H. Feldman, “Proselytes and ‘Sympathizers’ in Light of the New Inscriptions from Aphrodisias,” *REJ* 148/3-4 (1989): 265-305; Collar, *Religious Networks*, 234-40; Gary Gilbert, “Jews in Imperial Administration and its Significance for Dating the Jewish Donor Inscription from Aphrodisias,” *JSJ* 35 (2004): 170, who describes the Greek term θεοσεβής, “most commonly translated as God-fearer.”

¹⁴⁸ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 146 who provides a pagan example of a marble stele with a man lying on a couch and a woman and boy pouring a libation on an altar, taken from E. Pfuhl and H. Möbius, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs II* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1979), no. 1697: Ἐπιθέρησι τῷ θεοσεβῆ κ<α>ὶ Θεοκτίστῳ... for *Epitherses the pious one and Theoktista*.

¹⁴⁹ *LSJ* refer to the occurrence of θεοσεβής in the classical Greek sources Herodotos, Sophokles and Xenophon. Plato *Kratylos* 394 D: ὅταν ἐξ ἀνδρὸς ἀγαθοῦ καὶ θεοσεβοῦς ἀσεβῆς γένηται – *whenever an ungodly person becomes godly from good manhood*. It also occurs in the Mithras Liturgy *Preis. Zaub.*, 683/4 to refer to the act of prayer. See Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery Religions*, for the text of the Mithras Liturgy.

‘pious.’¹⁵⁰ Even in Jewish cases θεοσεβίς may be a designation of piety for a Jew rather than refer to a specific group of god-worshippers as described in this section.¹⁵¹ The meaning of the term may change between ‘god-worshipper’ and ‘pious’ according to the context.¹⁵² The term is then used of both a pious person of any religious group, or a specific group of god-worshippers connected to the Jewish synagogue. In the context of the Aphrodisias inscription and in the theatre seats in Miletos to be discussed below, the prominent place of *theosebeis* indicates that a group of god-worshippers was intended. It was not just pious people who were named among these groups. In these instances, Jews and *theosebeis* were clearly linked.

The Jewish theological system worked for these people. It provided an outlet for the expression of monotheism, but *theosebeis* were not bound by the rigorous minutiae of Jewish law. This relieved them of the core ethnic distinctions which imposed certain boundaries on Jewish involvement in mainstream Hellenistic culture.¹⁵³

Theosebeis were not converted to Judaism, as προσήλυτοι, proselytes. They were simply open to the theology and lifestyle of Judaism. Given that Judaism was a monotheistic religion, it is unsurprising that it gained appeal in the period studied here, in which pagan monotheism was trending in its various forms. Judaism itself may have appealed to some pagans as a system in which monotheistic tendencies in religion found an already developed expository partner. In fact, Collar goes as far as suggesting that the *theosebeis* (which she says are gentile ‘god-

¹⁵⁰ As Dietrich-Alex Koch, “The God-fearers between facts and fiction,” in *Studia Theologia – Nordic Journal of Theology*, 60/1 (2006): 69; Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 49. These go on to describe the alternative position of Louis Robert, who, noting the non-Jewish use of the term, says that φοβούμενοι and σεβόμενοι τὸν θεόν can refer to those who were associated with the Jewish community, but θεοσεβεῖς cannot.

¹⁵¹ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 54.

¹⁵² Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 146.

¹⁵³ See Figure 2, Chapter Four on the ethnic distinctions of Jews. Some *theosebeis* may have observed ethnic distinctions (except circumcision), but they were not bound to do so.

fearers’) were incorporated into “the existing, Judaizing cult of Theos Hypsistos.”¹⁵⁴ She bases this on the comparative lack of “god-fearer” inscriptions in the second and third centuries CE, alongside the abundance of inscriptions for Theos Hypsistos. This idea does not consider the emergence of pagan monotheism independently of Judaism, which is the position taken in this thesis.

The term θεοσεβής occurs as *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament.¹⁵⁵ It cannot be described as belonging to the Christian tradition in any other sense than ‘pious,’ as the meaning in John.

It is likely that the Ἕλληνες referred to by Luke in Acts¹⁵⁶ were either θεοσεβεῖς, φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν, or σεβόμενοι τὸν θεόν. These were present among the Jewish gatherings such as Paul’s visit represented. It is not precise to call *theosebeis* ‘god-fearers,’ as frequently happens. This is more properly the interpretation of φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν, (ones fearing god).¹⁵⁷ The φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν and σεβόμενοι τὸν θεόν¹⁵⁸ (ones worshipping god) and the Latin *metuentes* (fearing)¹⁵⁹ were terms used to describe people with Jewish associations. These groups might be related to the *theosebeis*, but this is disputed.¹⁶⁰ Reynolds and Tannenbaum think they are the same, even interchangeable.¹⁶¹ I suggest there is insufficient evidence to claim the New Testament

¹⁵⁴ Collar, *Religious Networks*, 240.

¹⁵⁵ John 9.31: οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀμαρτωλῶν ὁ θεὸς οὐκ ἀκούει, ἀλλ’ ἐάν τις θεοσεβῆς ἦ καὶ τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ ποιῇ τούτου ἀκούει – *for we know god does not hear sinners, but if ever any pious person for whom his will is done, god hears that one.*

¹⁵⁶ Acts 14.1; 17.4, 12; 18.4.

¹⁵⁷ Acts 10.2, 22, 35; 13.16, 26.

¹⁵⁸ Acts 13.43, 50; 16.14; 17.4; 18.7.

¹⁵⁹ Juvenal *Satirae* 14.96-101.

¹⁶⁰ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 146, who thinks that the occasional evidence of θεοσεβής in pagan sources discounts the possibility that it was a Jewish term for god-worshippers. But see Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 115-16, who thinks the inscriptional evidence of θεοσεβεῖς does refer to the ‘god-fearers’ of the New Testament. See also Koch, “The God-fearers between facts and fiction,” 80, who says that the θεοσεβεῖς of face A of the Aphrodisias inscription have the same function as the φοβούμενοι/σεβόμενοι τὸν θεόν references in the New Testament.

¹⁶¹ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 56, who base this assumption on Septuagintal references to all three as translations of Hebrew phrases meaning ‘those who fear god.’ From this they think θεοσεβεῖς should be translated ‘god-fearers.’

references to ‘god-fearers’ and the Latin use of *metuentes* referring to Jewish habits mean the same as the group of *theosebeis* which arose as distinct in the cultural environment of Asia Minor.

The *theosebeis* were permitted to attend the synagogue for worship, observe some customs such as the Sabbath and certain dietary regulations, but males were not circumcised. As such they were not considered Jews, unlike the more closely related proselytes, who were circumcised. The interaction between full Jews, proselytes and pagan god-worshippers provide examples of assimilation between Jews and pagans based around the place of the synagogue. The *theosebeis* through cultural assimilation found identity and acceptance and distinction in the Jewish synagogue, even if they were not given the status of a Jew. The synagogue provided a space for religious expression and a way of life that was agreeable within the religious framework identified by a *theosebes*.

The presence of *theosebeis* in the synagogue community provided valuable links between Jews and mainstream pagan culture.

Inscriptional evidence that *theosebeis* assisted the Jewish community in being integrated into the city comes from Tralles in Karia in the third century CE:

Καπετωλίνα ἡ ἀξιόλογ(ος) καὶ θεοσεβ(ής) (π)οήσασα τὸ πᾶμ
βάθρο[v] ἐσκούτλωσα τ[ὸν] (ἀ)ναβασμὸν ὑπ[έρ] εὐχῆς ἑαυτῆς [καὶ
?] πεδίων τε καὶ ἐγγόνων. Εὐλογία¹⁶²

*Kapetolina, the noteworthy and theosebes having made all the
stage and inlaying the stairs as a vow on behalf of herself and
her children and grandchildren. Blessings.*

Kapetolina was an important person in the city of Tralles.¹⁶³ She was related to Claudius Capitolinus Bassus, proconsul of the province of Asia. Her husband, T. Flavius Stasikles Metrophanes was a senator in

¹⁶² CIG 2924; IJO 27; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 157.

¹⁶³ Her Roman name was Claudia Capitolina.

Rome and priest of Zeus Larasios in Tralles.¹⁶⁴ Kapetolina's sons were called ὁ κρατίστος, strongest, mightiest, and Trebilco says they may also have been Roman senators. Her dedication was for the benefit of part of the Jewish synagogue in the city. It is not likely that Kapetolina was Jewish herself, given her senatorial connections and the fact that her husband was a pagan priest. Her title of *theosebēs* indicated she had significant association with the synagogue. This association is affirmed by the predominantly Jewish word εὐλογία at the end of the inscription.¹⁶⁵

Kapetolina was moderately assimilated with the Jewish community by way of her status as *theosebēs*. As a *theosebēs* she would have honoured the Jewish god in some form of worship and perhaps by study of the scriptures. She would also have observed some Jewish customs such as the Sabbath and possibly the abstinence of pork. It is impossible to discern if she abstained from sacrificial meat. Given her family connections and social position within the city, this may have been an area in which traditional pagan cultural practices prevailed. However, without evidence we cannot be sure.

As *theosebēs*, Kapetolina would have been closer in relationship to the Jews than Julia Severa of Akmonia a century and a half earlier, who was also a generous benefactor of the synagogue in that city. Julia was not a *theosebēs*, but rather was a priest of the imperial cult and it is reasonable to presume she would have been more culturally distant.¹⁶⁶

The family connections of Kapetolina in the city of Tralles gave status to the Jewish community there. It is another example of the well

¹⁶⁴ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 157.

¹⁶⁵ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 158.

¹⁶⁶ But see Ameling, "Die jüdischen Gemeinden im Antiken Kleinasien," 41, 50-51 who discusses the value of social status for the Jewish communities when it came to selecting officers, and with whom relationships were formed.

integration of Jewish cultural groups into the mainstream Hellenistic structures of an urban environment.

Most of the evidence for *theosebeis* comes from the second to the fourth centuries CE,¹⁶⁷ although they are known into the sixth century CE.¹⁶⁸ From the evidence from Aphrodisias at least, it appears that the *theosebeis* were an urban phenomenon.¹⁶⁹ I assign to the *theosebeis* as minority groups, a moderate to high degree of assimilation with Hellenistic culture in an urban cultural environment.

Unlike traditional paganism or Judaism, a person who was a *theosebes* made a personal choice to become one.¹⁷⁰ As has been previously discussed, personal choice and commitment to a group accompanied the changes in the cultural environment leading to a new religious situation. This included an increasing trend toward individualism. *Theosebeis* then, might not be made up of whole families. This raises questions around Kapetolina's wider family and their support or otherwise of her choice. The appearance of different religions within families was a significant break from traditional religion. It was also a potential source of conflict within families.¹⁷¹

Different religions within families also occurred in Christianity. An example is found in the family of the Christian disciple Timothy, whose mother was a Jew and father a Greek.¹⁷² It was to avoid any conflict with the Jews that Paul had Timothy circumcised.¹⁷³ To what

¹⁶⁷ Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 117.

¹⁶⁸ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 21; Marianne Palmer Bonz, "The Jewish Donor Inscriptions from Aphrodisias: Are they both Third-Century, and Who Are the Theosebeis?" *HSCP* 96 (1994): 281-99, who argues for a date of the Aphrodisias inscription in the fifth or sixth centuries. Bonz is supported by Angelos Chaniotis, "The Jews of Aphrodisias: New Evidence and Old Problems," *SCI* 21 (2002): 209-42.

¹⁶⁹ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 129.

¹⁷⁰ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 23.

¹⁷¹ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 186.

¹⁷² Acts 16.1.

¹⁷³ Acts 16.3: τοῦτον ἠθέλησεν ὁ Παῦλος σὺν αὐτῷ ἐξελεῖν, καὶ λαβὼν περιέτεμεν αὐτὸν διὰ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους τοὺς ὄντας ἐν τοῖς τόποις - *Paul wanted this one to go forth with*

degree the taking of Timothy and circumcising him caused intrafamily conflict is not considered in Acts. Independent personal alignment of a person as a Christian or a *theosebēs* are examples of the rise of the choice of individuals and a desire to make a personal commitment to god.

7.9 Case Study – Jewish citizens in Miletos and the *theosebēs*

Miletos was an important commercial city on the coast of Karia near the mouth of the Maeander river. Miletos was the governing city of the sanctuary of Apollo at nearby Didyma. Didyma was a major site of oracle production in the ancient world.¹⁷⁴ Determining the extent of Jewish presence in Miletos is hampered by limited evidence.¹⁷⁵ There is one important inscription which I discuss here, and the possibility of a synagogue.¹⁷⁶ The surviving inscription shows that the public life of Jews involved in civic and social roles in Miletos involved a reasonable degree of assimilation. Theatre seats were reserved in Miletos for prominent Jewish people. Attendance at theatre events required at least moderate acculturation. The fact the seats were reserved indicates high integration, or structural assimilation, with the city.

Events that took place in theatres included dramatic theatrical productions and gladiatorial games. These events were frequently presided over by representatives of the Roman emperor. Religious rituals, including sacrifice and honour of the divine emperor would have taken place at these events.

him, and taking hold of him he circumcised him on account of the Jews who were in that place.

¹⁷⁴ I will discuss Didyma more closely in Chapter Eight in relation to oracle production and pagan monotheism.

¹⁷⁵ Josephus *Ant* 14.244-6, refers to a Jewish community at Miletos.

¹⁷⁶ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 56 is unconvinced that there is sufficient evidence to say the building was ever a synagogue.

An inscription on a theatre seat in the fifth row from the front reads:

Τόπος Εἰουδέων τῶν καὶ θεοσεβίων¹⁷⁷

A place of Jews who are also god-worshippers



Figure 12: Photo of Miletos theatre seat with inscription from <http://holylandphotos.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/twcsml06.jpg>.

The text is dated from the late second to early third centuries CE. It is an important inscription because it appears to elevate the position of certain Jews for whom the seats were reserved. This inscription and the possible synagogue building suggest Miletos only supported a small Jewish community. If this was the case, the inscription shows the social and economic success of at least some well-integrated, successful Jews.

¹⁷⁷ *SEG* 4.441; *IJO* 37; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 159. See also Harland, *Associations, Synagogues and Congregations*, 110 figure 21a.

The short inscription is difficult to translate. The word θεοσεβίων refers to a group of people who may use the seats in the theatre, not an individual.¹⁷⁸ More commonly the singular form θεοσεβής is found. It may even refer to a personal name.¹⁷⁹ The text might also be read as, “A place of Jews who are also called the Pious Ones.”¹⁸⁰ If so, the qualification θεοσεβής, god-worshipper, pious, ascribed to the Jews in this inscription, may be an attempt by those Jews for whom the seats were reserved to publicly express the piety of their group. This would be especially important for a small, ethnically defined minority group living within the Hellenised urban environment. Theatrical events were an established part of Greek and Roman culture. There was potential for Jewish attendees to receive disapproval from within the Jewish community. The inclusion of the qualifier θεοσεβίων may also be an acknowledgement by the city of Miletos that Jews were to be known as god-worshippers.¹⁸¹

Schürer interprets the inscription as referring to two separate groups.¹⁸² This is entirely possible given the Aphrodisias evidence for the relationship between *theosebeis* and the Jewish community of the city. Schürer suggests that the text is meant to read as καὶ τῶν instead of τῶν καὶ. This would change the interpretation to mean “Place of the Jews and of god-worshippers.” Schürer does qualify his suggestion by saying that imposing such a correction should be avoided if possible. I agree that care must be taken with any reconstruction of wording which can be interpreted reasonably without making corrections to fit what we might like it to read instead. This agrees with the conventions

¹⁷⁸ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 159-60.

¹⁷⁹ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 159.

¹⁸⁰ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 160 and 253 n. 68.

¹⁸¹ This is the position of B. Lifshitz, “Beiträge zur griechisch – jüdischen Epigraphik,” *ZDPV* 82 (1966): 62-3. Cited in Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 160 and 253 n. 69.

¹⁸² Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, 167.

of textual criticism, in which the ‘harder’ reading of a variation is preferred.

Harland gives almost the same translation, although Harland does not consider Schürer’s reconstruction. Harland translates the text as seats reserved for a guild of, “Jews and God-fearers.”¹⁸³ Harland’s interpretation also suggests two groups of people may occupy the seats, both Jews and non-Jews who followed a similar faith expression. These seats were placed next to those reserved for ‘friends of the Augusti.’¹⁸⁴

The concluding formula of a first century inscription from Pantikapaion similarly expresses two groups of people:

ἐπιτροπευούσης τῆς συναγωγῆς τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ θεὸν σέβων¹⁸⁵
*being under the joint guardianship of the synagogue of the Jews
and of those worshipping god.*

The inscription concerns the manumission of a slave. In this example θεὸν σέβων occur as separate words. There is a clear distinction between these god-worshippers and the *Ioudaioi*.

If there were two groups of people intended in the theatre inscription it indicates that there was significant assimilation between the Jewish community at Miletos and the city. If two groups shared seats it suggests the city recognised a close relationship between the groups. It might also mean the city made no distinction between the two groups, regardless of how they each self-identified. The inscription could also have been inscribed by stonemasons connected to the theatre who did not know what was intended in the writing and could therefore have made an error in interpretation.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues and Congregations*, 109.

¹⁸⁴ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues and Congregations*, 109. See photo in Harland, 110 figure 21b.

¹⁸⁵ *CIRB* no. 71 lines 7-10 = *CIJ P* no. 683a; Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 155.

¹⁸⁶ See Strelan, “Languages of the Lycus Valley,” on the difficulty in discerning the proficiency of a stone mason’s Greek.

Trebilco, with Rajak, who along with Schürer, consider the evidence of the Aphrodisias *theosebeis*, agree that there were two groups intended, both *Ioudaioi* and *theosebeis*.¹⁸⁷ I am not convinced in this example that two groups were intended. Despite Schürer's compelling argument about the position of the καί and the τῶν, I cannot base a reconstruction on that possibility. I take the inscription as it stands and read the τῶν as a relative pronoun, even though the case of θεοσεβίον doesn't grammatically fit. Despite the Aphrodisias evidence of a prominent group of *theosebeis* in that city who were distinct from Jews, I think there also is sufficient evidence of diversity within Jewish communities across Asia Minor that the Miletos Jews may be named "Jews who were also god-worshippers."

Whether one or two groups were intended in the inscription on the theatre seats at Miletos, the holders would have been frequent attenders and respected people in the civic and social structures. Fifth row seats would have afforded spectacular views of activities in the theatre and holders of the seats would have been in clear view of the audience.

From the evidence of the presence of Jews in Miletos who were sufficiently prominent to have reserved seats in the large theatre in the city, it seems Jews there were respected and involved at the civic level. Ordinary members of the Milesian community would not have been granted seats in such a good position. A high degree of acculturation and identification with the customs of the society may be presumed by the Jewish occupiers of the seats. Persons in civic roles allowed access to such seats would have been embedded in municipal structures and thus integrated into the hierarchy of Miletos.

¹⁸⁷ Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, 161 and Tessa Rajak, "Jews and Christians as Groups in a Pagan World," in 'To See Ourselves As Others See Us.' *Christians, Jews, 'Others' in Late Antiquity*, J. Neusner and E. S. Frierichs (eds.) (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985), 258.

7.10 Case study – *theosebeis* in Aphrodisias

The city of Aphrodisias in Karia in southwestern Asia Minor is an important cult centre of the pagan god Aphrodite. The city prospered through the imperial period. Along with other cities of Asia Minor it suffered through the third century CE and experienced a change in status.¹⁸⁸ It eventually became linked with the Eastern Roman Empire and later the Byzantine Empire. Whilst a Christian bishopric was established there, the pagan roots of the city were strong, the cult of Aphrodite deeply embedded. Efforts to eradicate the city's pagan past were evidenced in the erasure in inscriptions of the name Aphrodisias.¹⁸⁹

Despite the significance given to its pagan link to the cult of Aphrodite, it seems that there was a well-established Jewish community in the city¹⁹⁰ with assimilating links with non-Jewish god-worshippers. A significant inscription recording the names of *theosebeis* alongside Jews helps to build a picture of cultural assimilation in Aphrodisias. This will be studied in detail below.

Other inscriptional evidence of Jews in Aphrodisias further indicates their presence in the city.¹⁹¹ Inscriptions have been found in the

¹⁸⁸ Erim, *Aphrodisias*, 14.

¹⁸⁹ Erim, *Aphrodisias*, 14.

¹⁹⁰ Chaniotis, "The Jews of Aphrodisias," 209, who says that, "the existence of a large and apparently prospering Jewish community at Aphrodisias" is the only uncontroversial thing that can be said from the inscription discussed here.

¹⁹¹ See Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, Appendix 132-46; Chaniotis, "The Jews of Aphrodisias," Appendix II," 236-8. Chaniotis, 220 says that Aphrodisias is one of the best documented sites with a Jewish community in Asia Minor, alongside Sardis and Hierapolis.

odeon,¹⁹² south agora,¹⁹³ tetrastoon,¹⁹⁴ nymphaeum,¹⁹⁵ as well as on buildings in various other places in the city.¹⁹⁶ Two inscriptions regarded as Jewish by Chaniotis are dedicated to Theos Hypsistos.¹⁹⁷ Jewish symbols have also been found inscribed in several places in the city and on clay pottery fragments. These symbols include menorah, lulab, shofar, ethrogh, palm branch.¹⁹⁸

7.10.1 Inscriptional evidence of *theosebeis* at Aphrodisias

The inscription found in Aphrodisias links the Jewish community with the associated *theosebeis*.¹⁹⁹ From the information contained in this inscription valuable insight into the lives of Jews of that city and the degree of assimilation of the Aphrodisian Jewish community with the mainstream Hellenistic culture can be shown. It also reveals the acceptance of acculturating practices between different cultural groups through the significant inclusion of non-Jewish people in the synagogue. The text follows:

¹⁹² Examples from the odeon in Aphrodisias designating seating for Jewish groups has been found. Chaniotis, “The Jews of Aphrodisias,” 220, 237 no. 17; *SEG* 37 846; Reynolds and Tannenbaum, 132 no. 1: τόπος Βενέτων | Ἐβρέων τῶν παλαιῶν – *a place of the Benetos’ of the elderly Hebrews*; Chaniotis, “The Jews of Aphrodisias,” 219, 237 no. 18; *SEG* 37 847: τόπος [[Ἐβρ]]έων – *a place of the Hebrews*. Reynolds and Tannenbaum, 132 say the use of Ἐβραῖοι rather than Ἰουδαῖοι places these inscriptions at a very late sixth century CE date.

¹⁹³ Chaniotis, “The Jews of Aphrodisias,” 236 no. 3, a prayer.

¹⁹⁴ Chaniotis, “The Jews of Aphrodisias,” 236 no. 5; *SEG* 37 850.

¹⁹⁵ Chaniotis, “The Jews of Aphrodisias,” 238 no. 29; *SEG* 37 849.

¹⁹⁶ Chaniotis, “The Jews of Aphrodisias,” 238 nos. 24, 25, 26, 32.

¹⁹⁷ Chaniotis, “The Jews of Aphrodisias,” 238, no. 30; *SEG* 37 849; Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 138 no. 11: Μα|ρκια|[v]δς|θεῶ|ύψισ|[τοι εὐ]χῆ – *Markianos a prayer to Theos Hypsistos*; and no. 31; *SEG* 37 854; Reynolds and Tannenbaum, 138-9 no. 12: Τατας|[-θ]εῶ|ύψιστω – *Tatas to Theos Hypsistos*.

¹⁹⁸ Chaniotis, “The Jews of Aphrodisias,” 236-8.

¹⁹⁹ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers* = *SEG* 36 (1986) 970; *IJO* 14. Reynolds and Tannenbaum have published the inscription in full, with extensive commentary on the stone and its interpretation. The stone was unearthed during the construction of the Aphrodisias museum and first published by the leader of the archaeological team: Kenan T. Erim, *AJA* 81 (1977) 306; *AS* 27 (1977) 31. The inscription has been the subject of much scholarly research subsequently, particularly in relation to dating. See discussion below.

Face a

Col. (i)		Θεὸς βοηθός, πατέλλα? δο[. 1 or 2.]
		Οἱ ὑποτεταγμέ-
		νοι τῆς δεκαν(ίας)
		τῶν φιλομαθῶ[ν]
	5	τῶν κὲ παντευλογ(--ων)
		εἰς ἀπενθησίαν
		τῷ πλήθι ἔκτισα[ν]
		ἐξ ἰδίων μνημα
		Ἰαηλ προστάτης
Σα-		
μου	10	v. σὺν υἱῷ Ἰωσοῦα ἄρχ(οντι?)
ηλ		Θεόδοτος Παλατῖν(ος?) σὺν
πρεσ		v. υἱῷ Ἰλαριανῶ vac.
βευ-		Σαμουηλ ἀρχιδ(έκανος?) προσήλ(υτος)
τῆς		Ἰωσῆς Ἰεσσέου vacat
Περ-	15	Βενιαμιν ψαλμο(λόγος?)
γε-		Ἰούδας εὐκόλος vacat
ούς		Ἰωσῆς προσήλυ(τος)
		Σαββάτιος Ἀμαχίου
		Ἐμμόνιος θεοσεβ(ής) v.v.
	20	Ἄντωνῖνος θεοσεβ(ής)
		Σαμουηλ Πολιτιανοῦ
		<u>Εἰωσηφ Εὐσεβίου προσή(λυτος)</u>
		<u>κα[ι] Εἰούδας Θεοδώρ(ου)</u>
		<u>καὶ Ἀντιπέος Ἐρμή(ου?)</u>
	25	<u>καὶ Σαβάθιος νεκτάρης</u>
		[?κα]ι Σαμο[υ]ηλ πρεσ-
		<u>βευτῆς ἱερεὺς</u>

Col. (ii) (at an angle to i and in a different hand)

If cut when the stele was standing: ΝΜΔ

If cut upside down to the main text: ΠΩΝ

- Face *b* [? one line completely lost]
[. . . c. 8 . . . Σ]εραπίωνος *v.* [*v.*]
[one line completely erased]
[Ἰωση]φ Ζήνωνος *vacat*
- 5 [Ζή]νων Ἰακωβ *stop* Μανασῆς Ἰωφ *sic*
Ἰούδας Εὐσεβίου *vacat*
Ἐορτάσιος Καλλικάρπου *vacat*
Βιωτικός *stop* Ἰούδας Ἀμφιανοῦ
Εὐγένιος χρυσοχόος *vacat*
- 10 Πραοίλιος *stop* Ἰούδας Πραοιλίου *v.*
Ῥοῦφος *stop* Ὀξυχόλιος γέρων
Ἀμάντιος Χαρίνου *stop* Μύρτιλος
Ἰακω προβατον(όμος?) *stop* Σεβῆρος *vacat*
Εὐδοδος *stop* Ἰάσων Εὐόδου *vacat*
- 15 Εὐσαββάθιος λαχα(νοπώλης?) *stop* Ἀνύσιος
Εὐσαββάθιος ξένος *stop* Μίλων
Ὀξυχόλιος νεώτερος *vacat*
Διογένης *stop* Εὐσαββάθιος Διογέν(ους)
[Ἰού]δας Παύλου *stop* Θεόφιλος *vac.*
- 20 [Ἰ]α[κ]ωβ ὁ κέ Ἀπελλί(ων?) *stop* Ζαχαρίας μονο(πώλης?)
[Λε]όντιος Λεοντίου *stop* Γέμελλος
[Ἰο]ύδας Ἀχολίου *stop* Δαμόνικος *vacat*
Εὐτάρκιος Ἰούδα *stop* Ἰωσηφ Φιληρ(?)
Εὐσαββάθιος Εὐγενίου *vacat*
- 25 Κύρυλλος *stop* Εὐτύχιος χαλκο(τύπος?)
Ἰωσηφ παστι(λλάριος?) *stop* Ῥουβην παστι(ιλλάριος?)
Ἰούδας Ὀρτασί(ου) *stop* Εὐτύχιος ὀρν(ιθοπώλης?)
Ἰούδας ὁ κέ Ζωσι(?) *stop* Ζήνων γρυτ(οπώλης?)
Ἀμμιανὸς χιλᾶς *stop* Αἰλιανὸς Αἰλια(νοῦ)
- 30 Αἰλιανὸς ὁ καὶ Σαμουηλ Φίλανθος
Γοργόνιος Ὀξυ(χολίου) *stop* Ἐορτάσιος Ἀχιλλέ(ως)
Εὐσαββάθιος Ὀξυχ(ολίου) *stop* Παρηγόριος
Ἐορτάσιος Ζωτικοῦ Συμεών Ζην(?)
vacat
- Καὶ ὅσοι θεοσεβῆς *stop* Ζήνων βουλ(ευτής)

- 35 Τέρτυλλος βουλ(ευτής) *stop* Διογένης βουλ(ευτής)
 Ὀνήσιμος βουλ(ευτής) *stop* Ζήνων Λονγι(ανοῦ?) βου(λευτής)
 Ἀντιπέος βουλ(ευτής) *stop* Ἀντίοχος βουλ(ευτής)
 Ῥωμανὸς βουλ(ευτής) *stop* Ἀπονήριος βουλ(ευτής)
 Εὐπίθιος πορφυρ(ᾶς) *stop* Στρατήγιος
- 40 Ξάνθος *vacat* Ξάνθος Ξάνθου *v.*
 Ἀπονήριος Ἀπον(ηρίου) *stop* Ὑψικλῆς Μελ(?) *stop*
 Πολυχρόνιος Ξάν(θου) *stop* Ἀθηνίων Αἰ(λιανοῦ?)
 Καλλίμορφος Καλ(λιμόρφου?) *stop* ΙΟΪΝΒΑΛΟΣ
 Τυχικὸς Τυχι(κοῦ) *stop* Γληγόριος Τυχι(κοῦ) *v.*
- 45 Πολυχρόνιος βελ(?) *stop* Χρύσιππος
 Γοργόνιος χαλ(κοτύπος?) *stop* Τατιανὸς Ὄξυ(χολίου?)
 Ἀπελλᾶς Ἥγε(μονέως?) *stop* Βαλεριανὸς πενα(κᾶς?)
 Εὐσαββάθιος Ἡδ(υχρόος?) ?Μανικιος Ἀττά(λου?) *vac.*
 Ὀρτάσιος λατύ(πος?) *stop* Βραβεὺς *vacat*
- 50 Κλαυδιανὸς Καλ(λιμόρφου?) *stop* Ἀλέξανδρος πυ(?)
 Ἀππιανὸς λευ(?) *stop* Ἀδόλιος ἰσικιάριος
 Ζωτικὸς ψελ(λός?) *stop* Ζωτικὸς γρύλλος
 Εὐπίθιος Εὐπι(θίου) *stop* Πατρίκιος χαλκο(τύπος)
 Ἐλπιδιανὸς ἄθλη(τῆς?) *stop* Ἡδυχροῦς *vacat*
- 55 Εὐτρόπιος Ἡδυ(χρόος) *stop* Καλλίνικος *vac.*
 Βαλεριανὸς ἀρκά(ριος?) *stop* Εὔρετος Ἀθηναγ(όρου)
 Παράμονος ἰκονο(γράφος?) *stop* *vacat*
 Εὐτυχιανὸς γναφ(εύς) *stop* Προκόπιος τρα(πεζίτης?)
 Προυνίκιος γναφ(εύς) *stop* Στρατόνικος γναφ(εύς)
- 60 Ἀθηναγόρας τέκτω(ν) *vacat*
Μελίτων Ἀμαζονίου *vacat*
vacat *vacat*

Figure 13: Text of Aphrodisias inscription from Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 5-7.

The marble stone block on which the text is incised is of a size sufficient to accommodate the lengthy text.²⁰⁰ It is inscribed on faces A

²⁰⁰ 2.80 m high x approx 0.46-0.425 width across faces a, b, c, d.

and B. The two main texts are in different hands, with a further hand evident on both inscribed faces. There is damage to the top and bottom of the stone and sides, with scratching on all faces. Nonetheless, the bulk of the text is clear. The letter styling is different throughout the text (ie., use of regular alpha A and dropped bar A, both angular sigma Σ and lunate C), making it difficult to date from letter style.²⁰¹ Neither does it conform to the standard tradition of inscriptions from Aphrodisias.²⁰²



Figure 14: Photo image of part of the Aphrodisias inscription. <https://www.keepandshare.com/photo/385599/aphrodisias-stadium?ifr=y> In the top line the word ΘEOCEBIC can be read (lunate sigma). The text is neatly carved with spaces between names. Letters are of a regular height.

Taking account of name style and letter forms, Reynolds and Tannenbaum suggest a date range between the late second and early third centuries CE for face B. Although these admit the features of the text on face A could date anywhere from the second through to the fifth centuries, and that there is no conclusive dating evidence they opt for

²⁰¹ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 20; Chaniotis, “The Jews of Aphrodisias,” 214.

²⁰² Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 19-20.

the early third century for the overall inscription.²⁰³ Scholars such as Chaniotis, Botermann, Gilbert, Koch and Bonz have exposed the fallibility of the dating arguments proposed by Reynolds and Tannenbaum.²⁰⁴ More recent scholarship has taken faces A and B as two separate inscriptions composed centuries apart.²⁰⁵ Face B is likely to be dated to the early third century, as Reynolds and Tannenbaum suggest. Face A is likely to be later, either fourth or fifth century, as the discussions below indicate.

Gary Gilbert, after analysing the work of scholars including the initial work of Reynolds and Tannenbaum and subsequent to them, thinks a date in the fourth century is most likely.²⁰⁶ He bases this on an analysis of the imperial roles of named Jews such as Θεόδοτος Παλατῖνος, (face A line 11).²⁰⁷ Theodotos was a member of the δεκανία (see below), who along with his son Hilarianos (face A line 12), contributed to funding the monument. The *palatinus* was an administrative officer of the imperial court. The service of a Jew in this role “reflects a social reality consistent with the fourth century and unlikely to have existed in the fifth or sixth.”²⁰⁸ Jews from elsewhere in the empire gained imperial service in the fourth century,²⁰⁹ but Gilbert excludes the fifth century as a likely date of composition due to the legal restrictions and disabilities imposed on Jews from that time.²¹⁰

²⁰³ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 20. These authors present their argument for dating on pages 19-24.

²⁰⁴ On the dating of the inscription see for example, Chaniotis, “The Jews of Aphrodisias;” Bonz, “The Jewish Donor Inscriptions from Aphrodisias;” Helga Botermann, “Griechisch-jüdische Epigraphik: zur Datierung der Aphrodisias-Inschriften,” *ZPE* 98 (1993): 184-94; Gilbert, “Jews in Imperial Administration,” 169-84; Koch, “The God-fearers between facts and fiction.” Commentary on the inscription, including dating is given in Ameling *IJO* 14, 71-112;

²⁰⁵ See discussion below.

²⁰⁶ Gilbert, “Jews in Imperial Administration,” 171ff; cf., *IJO* 94.

²⁰⁷ Gilbert, “Jews in Imperial Administration,” 176.

²⁰⁸ Gilbert, “Jews in Imperial Administration,” 176.

²⁰⁹ Gilbert, “Jews in Imperial Administration,” 177.

²¹⁰ In 404 CE Honorius and Arcadius barred Jews and Samaritans from imperial office. This was followed up by Valentinian III and Theodosius II. See Gilbert, “Jews in Imperial Administration,” 177-78.

Helga Botermann similarly argues for a date in the fourth century from a careful analysis and critique of the work of Reynolds and Tannebaum.²¹¹ Botermann assesses that the absence of the *nomen* Aurelius in the two texts, which Reynolds and Tannenbaum use as the main argument for an early date is not justified.²¹² Botermann notes that naming based on Roman citizenship (granted to free-born residents of the empire in 212 CE), is not consistent in the evidence.²¹³ She also refers to the dating of the large worship space of the synagogue of Sardis, which she puts in the fourth century.²¹⁴ Botermann suggests that a sizeable community of god-worshippers and Jews in Aphrodisias required a similar sized space for worship and other activities such as the fourth century example of Sardis, a conclusion which is dispelled by Gilbert.²¹⁵

Marianne Palmer Bonz takes faces A and B of the inscription as two separate texts with different dates. Taking into consideration the work of Reynolds and Tannenbaum and confirming their uncertainty about the dating of face A of the inscription, Bonz argues that face A at least should be dated as late as the fifth or sixth century CE.²¹⁶ If this is the case it means that the material contained on the later dated face A cannot be used to interpret the earlier composed text on face B.²¹⁷ Bonz's argument is dependent on her assessment of the introductory phrase θεὸς βοηθός, helper god, in line one of face A.²¹⁸ Gilbert thinks this argument cannot discount a date of composition in the fourth century, and that, "The expression θεὸς βοηθός, therefore, cannot offer

²¹¹ Botermann, "Griechisch-jüdische Epigraphik," 187-89.

²¹² Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 20.

²¹³ Botermann, "Griechisch-jüdische Epigraphik," 187-89.

²¹⁴ Botermann, "Griechisch-jüdische Epigraphik," 188.

²¹⁵ Botermann, "Griechisch-jüdische Epigraphik," 186, 190; Gilbert, "Jews in Imperial Administration," 173. Botermann, 189 does however qualify that the Aphrodisias inscription studied here and the donor inscriptions found in the Sardis synagogue cannot be compared.

²¹⁶ Bonz, "The Jewish Donor Inscriptions from Aphrodisias," 289-90.

²¹⁷ Bonz, "The Jewish Donor Inscriptions from Aphrodisias," 290.

²¹⁸ Bonz, "The Jewish Donor Inscriptions from Aphrodisias," 289-90; cf., Gilbert, "Jews in Imperial Administration," 174.

probative support for a fifth century date, nor can it exclude the fourth century as a possible time frame for dating the inscription.”²¹⁹

Despite Gilbert’s reservations, Chaniotis is persuaded by Bonz’s dating of face A from her assessment of the term θεὸς βοηθός.²²⁰ Chaniotis carefully analyses the distribution of names on the faces as key to dating.²²¹ The results of this study lead him to propose a date after 250 for face B and, in agreeance with Bonz, as late as the fifth century for face A.²²² Dietrich-Alex Koch follows a similar argument as Chaniotis. He identifies two separate inscriptions from the inscribed faces with a date in the fourth century for face B and fifth century for face A.²²³

In my analysis of the scholarship of the Aphrodisias stele I am prepared to accept that the two faces which were clearly inscribed by different hands, were written down in different centuries. I am also conscious that there is a third hand evident and that scholars other than Reynolds and Tannenbaum have not engaged with this.²²⁴ I agree with Bonz, Chaniotis, Gilbert, Koch and Botermann that the text of face B was composed first. I am persuaded that it belonged to the third century and is an example of a changing religious situation that extended beyond itself and into the fourth century when I concur with Botermann and Gilbert that face A was inscribed.

The difficulties with dating the inscription aside, the stele represents a religious situation concurrent with other phenomena related to monotheism in Asia Minor already discussed, including Theos Hypsistos worship. I deduce that this exciting text, particularly the

²¹⁹ Gilbert, “Jews in Imperial Administration,” 174-75.

²²⁰ Chaniotis, “The Jews of Aphrodisias,” 215.

²²¹ Chaniotis, “The Jews of Aphrodisias,” 218 and 232-35, Appendix I.

²²² Chaniotis, “The Jews of Aphrodisias,” 218; Bonz, “The Jewish Donor Inscriptions from Aphrodisias,” 289.

²²³ Koch, “The God-fearers between facts and fiction,” 66.

²²⁴ To do so here is beyond the scope of this thesis.

material contained in the earlier dated face B, is a product of the cultural environment in which diverse forms of monotheism arose.

The block is likely to have served architecturally as either a pilaster or free-standing stele.²²⁵ Reynolds and Tannenbaum suggest its purpose was to honour those who had given funds for a *πατέλλα*, which in their estimation functioned as a ‘soup kitchen,’ providing meals to those in need.²²⁶ The *πατέλλα* as a Jewish charitable institution gives us some insight into the scope of life within a synagogue based community, including its commitment to caring for the less fortunate. To what degree it’s function may be measured against pagan associations which looked after the poor, and the Christian imperative to care for widow and orphan²²⁷ may not be clearly determined here. The narrowness of the content of the inscription limits its usefulness in what it may divulge about the function of those who set it up.²²⁸

Scholarship since Reynolds and Tannenbaum has considered the scope of function of the *πατέλλα* to be wider than that envisioned by this first study.²²⁹ Botermann notes the high number of pagans listed as donors in the inscription and that the charitable emphasis of pagans differed from Jews and Christians.²³⁰ Pagans relied on the generosity and ability of individuals of wealth to supply the needs of the poor. In the fourth century, the capacity of individual donation began to collapse as pagan institutions gave way to the Christian empire.²³¹ This suggestion adds further support to the dating of face A of the

²²⁵ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 19 conclude that it most likely was a stele.

²²⁶ A very difficult word to interpret, but essentially a dish or offering dish into which was placed cooked food to be distributed to the poor. *LSJ* equate the word with *πατάνη*, a flat dish, and cite Sophron. ap. Poll. 10.107 and Hesychios; Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 26-7.

²²⁷ For example, James 1.27; 1 Tim 5.3.

²²⁸ That is, a list of names and trade designations. See below.

²²⁹ See discussion on the interpretation of *πατέλλα* in Koch, “The God-fearers between facts and fiction,” 71-3.

²³⁰ Botermann, “Griechisch-jüdische Epigraphik,” 192-93.

²³¹ Botermann, “Griechisch-jüdische Epigraphik,” 193.

Aphrodisias inscription to the fourth century. Botermann thinks that a general emergency initiated the establishment of the *πατέλλα*,²³² and Gilbert that the charitable service extended to the entire Aphrodisian community affected, not just those connected to the Jewish community.²³³

Most of the text on both inscribed faces comprises names and occupations. A list of names appears on face A of the inscription. The names are of significant donors to and initiators of the monument. They are members of a *δεκάνια*. This unusual word²³⁴ refers to a group of men (women's names are an uncommon omission in this inscription throughout)²³⁵ who were well off enough to provide resources to construct the well-executed monument, and presumably fund the charitable resource to the community of the *patella*.²³⁶ The group appeared to serve a purpose in the synagogue related to regulating prayer, readings and public services.²³⁷ It does not seem that the number in the group must be restricted to ten (*δέκα*). This *dekania* may have had as many as eighteen or nineteen members.²³⁸ Ten may have been a minimum to ensure public services happened. The *dekania* might also have been a governing body of the synagogue of Aphrodisias, although Reynolds and Tannenbaum are not convinced.²³⁹

²³² Botermann, "Griechisch-jüdische Epigraphik," 193.

²³³ Gilbert, "Jews in Imperial Administration," 170 n. 3.

²³⁴ Attested epigraphically elsewhere in Jewish context only once, in a Roman catacomb, where its interpretation is unclear. Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 28. *LSJ* relate it to *δεκάς*, a company of ten; *Iliad* 2.126; Herodotos 3.25.

²³⁵ But see Bernadette Brooten, "The Gender of *Ιαηλ* in the Jewish Inscription from Aphrodisias," in *Of Scribes and Scrolls: Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental Judaism, and Christian Origins* (ed. H. W. Attridge; College Theology Society Resources in Religion 5; Lanham: University Press of America, 1990), 163-73, who argues that *Ιαηλ* in line 9 of face A, is a woman.

²³⁶ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 28-9.

²³⁷ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 28-9, like the Jewish *minyan*, a quorum of ten men responsible for synagogue activities who usually did no other paid work. *m Meg.* 1.3; *y Meg.* 1.6.70b; *b Meg.* 5a.

²³⁸ Lines 9-26 (face A).

²³⁹ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 31-2. Elders of synagogue and *ἀρχισυνάγωγος*, leader of a synagogue, and other synagogue officials are not mentioned. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People* Vol. 1, 180 says the *deka protoi* was a Hellenic institution, as well as the foundation of the synagogue.

It could also be a beneficent association.²⁴⁰ Such an association would be involved in assisting people with the processes around funerals and burials. This is entirely possible, given the presence of μνήμα, tomb, in line eight.²⁴¹ The possibility of this μνήμα being a public tomb²⁴² to be used for those who did not have the funds for private burial is a suggestion.²⁴³ A public tomb fits with the charitable purpose of the *patella*, although more likely is the occurrence here of μνήμα in a Jewish context as a memorial, rather than an actual tomb. It is likely then that the stele is a memorial of a building donation.²⁴⁴ These interpretations suggest the function of the *patella* was wider than a simple ‘soup kitchen’ to assist the poor, although this function is not to be completely dismissed.

Within the names of the members of the *dekania* appear three προσήλυτοι, proselytes,²⁴⁵ those who have come over, or converted, to Judaism.²⁴⁶ Gilbert notes that the naming of proselytes in inscriptions is rare, and none are attested epigraphically in Asia Minor.²⁴⁷ Clearly the status of these proselytes, named alongside other members of the *dekania* is comparable with regular Jews in Aphrodisias in practice, not just law.²⁴⁸ Complete conversion required circumcision of males, and in the Roman Empire this act performed on non-Jews was

²⁴⁰ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 37.

²⁴¹ Line 8 (face A): ἐξ ἰδίων μνήμα.

²⁴² A Jewish public tomb is attested in Lykia, *CIG* II 856-58, cited in Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 38. A public tomb provided for the needs of people without sufficient resources to bury their dead.

²⁴³ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 38.

²⁴⁴ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 39-40 with an example of this usage of μνήμα in *CIG* II 848.

²⁴⁵ Proselytes and Jews in close company is recorded in Acts 2.11: Ἰουδαῖοί τε καὶ προσήλυτοι – *both Jews and proselytes*. The grammatical use of τε καὶ here ensures these two groups are recognised together in the regional groupings named in this passage as gathered for the Pentecost event.

²⁴⁶ Line 13 (face A): Σαμουηλ ἀρχιδ(έκανος) προσήλ(υτος) – *Samuel archidekania (leader or president of the dekania) a proselyte*; Line 17 (face A): Ἰωσῆς προσήλ(υτος) – *Ioses a proselyte*; Line 22 (face A): Εἰωσιφ Εὐσεβίου προσή(λυτος) – *Ioseph son of Eusebios a proselyte*.

²⁴⁷ Gilbert, “Jews in Imperial Administration,” 182.

²⁴⁸ This might affirm the grouping together in Acts 2.11 as referred in note above.

punishable by death in places where Roman law was enforced (not necessarily it seems in Aphrodisias) in the time in which this inscription is likely to have been composed.²⁴⁹ Therefore becoming a proselyte was a significant, and possibly risky, personal decision.²⁵⁰

As noted above, face B is not necessarily a continuation of face A, but a separate inscription altogether.²⁵¹ Face B includes names of others who contributed to the monument and their trade designations. There are 61 lines of text on face B as opposed to face A which has 27 lines. The names on face B are to be distinguished from those listed in the *dekania* of face A. The positioning of names is likely to reflect personal status. The higher in order a name is listed, the greater the status. The placing of the names of *theosebeis* second place behind Jews indicates they did not share the same status as the Jews named before them. Even in the placement of names in the *dekania* the *theosebeis* come low on the list. Therefore, the hierarchy of names does not reflect social status. There are nine βουλευται, city councillors, among the *theosebeis*.²⁵² The inclusion of city councillors among those welcomed and involved in the life of the synagogue, even if not Jews themselves, gave prestige to the Jewish community and greater integration with the mainstream Hellenistic culture. There continues to exist no evidence that the Jewish community did not maintain its ethnic distinction.

Inclusion of city officials raises questions about the roles these as dedicated *theosebeis* would have had in pagan sacrificial rituals that

²⁴⁹ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 43-4. Gilbert, "Jews in Imperial administration," 182 affirms that conversion to Judaism continued through the Roman period, despite legislation prohibiting it.

²⁵⁰ Politically, as well as the risk of physical injury due to infection in adult males.

²⁵¹ Koch, "The God-fearers between facts and fiction," 64; Bonz, "The Jewish Donor Inscriptions from Aphrodisias," argues throughout for two separate inscriptions with different dates; Chaniotis, "The Jews of Aphrodisias," similarly presents the texts as distinct with differing dates.

²⁵² Lines 34-8 face B.

were part of the public office.²⁵³ If these roles continued to involve sacrificial acts, it affirms that *theosebeis* were not bound as strictly to the law as full Jews. It also indicates a willingness on the part of full Jews to accept that *theosebeis* could advantage the Jewish community by undertaking practices that were forbidden to them. In this way *theosebeis* were instrumental for elevating the status of the Jewish community. Overtures toward the *theosebeis* who were also city officials, beneficent people toward their community, provided important cultural crossover links.

Again, the inclusion of people with these roles did not affect the integrity of Judaism as such because *theosebeis*, no matter how well accepted and involved in the life of the synagogue, were not considered Jews. This is probably how the leading Jews themselves made provision for the flourishing and advancement of the Jewish community within the city. Later, provision was publicly made for Jews to become councillors and abstain from public sacrifice.²⁵⁴ From the early third century there is inscriptional evidence of Jews holding office as councillors in Sardis.²⁵⁵

Two members of the *dekania* on face A were *theosebeis*.²⁵⁶ From face B there are 52 named *theosebeis*²⁵⁷ making a total of 54 *theosebeis* in the inscription on both faces. This is a substantial amount. It indicates a high level of cultural assimilation between non-Jews and full Jews over the centuries, even if the two faces of the inscription are considered as separate texts. I suggest that the *theosebeis* were an accepted part of the life of the synagogue and they participated quite

²⁵³ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 58.

²⁵⁴ Diogenes Laertius 50.2.3.3. Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 66 and 130 n. 11; A. R. R. Sheppard, "Jews, Christians and Heretics in Acmonia and Eumeneia," *AS* 29 (1979): 169.

²⁵⁵ Sheppard, "Jews, Christians and Heretics," 170, citing L. Robert, *Nouvelles Inscriptions de Sardes I* (Paris, 1965): 55ff.

²⁵⁶ Lines 19-20: Ἐμμόνιος θεοσεβ(ής) | Ἀντωνῖος θεοσεβ(ής) – *Emmonios god-worshipper, Antonios god-worshipper*.

²⁵⁷ Lines 34-60 face B.

fully in Jewish teaching and worship, as well as participating in at least some of the laws.²⁵⁸ From his assessment of face B, the earlier written text, Koch disagrees that the relationship between the Jewish synagogue and the *theosebeis* was anything other than social and the donations were given charitably, and not because of a religious relationship.²⁵⁹ Koch's position does not take account of any interest of pagans in monotheistic religion, which as presented in this thesis, gained appeal in the first three imperial centuries. Even if the inscription/s were produced later than the third century, the interest in monotheism did not die out. As noted in Chapter Six, the character of pagan monotheism became more defined from the fourth century. The type of relationship between the *theosebeis* and the Jewish community in the Aphrodisias inscription described by Koch more closely resembles that of Julia Severa and the Jews in Akmonia. Julia was a benefactor of the synagogue in Akmonia, but there is no evidence of her as a 'god-worshipper.'

Koch determines that the role of the *theosebeis* on face A of the inscription was different than face B. The two *theosebeis* were more closely connected to the Jewish synagogue and interested in worship practices, which is why they were members of the *dekania*.²⁶⁰ I am not convinced by Koch's argument that the *theosebeis* named on the two faces of the inscription served a different function. If face B is as Koch says written earlier than face A, then it may more closely belong to the cultural trend of pagans toward monotheistic views. The two inscriptions display continuity in the role and place of *theosebeis* in the life of the synagogue in Aphrodisias over centuries.

²⁵⁸ But see Gilbert, "Jews in Imperial Administration," 173 and n. 14 who says that it was unlikely that the *theosebeis* named at Aphrodisias worshipped ever in the Jewish community; cf., Koch, below.

²⁵⁹ Koch, "The God-fearers between facts and fiction," 68.

²⁶⁰ Koch, "The God-fearers between facts and fiction," 74-5.

The *theosebeis* of Aphrodisias did not only belong to a certain social class. They came from a variety of backgrounds. This shows similarity with Christian groups and dissimilarity with some pagan associations.²⁶¹ Christian groups were formed on the bases of equal membership, no matter external status, even if it did not always work out that way.²⁶² Some pagan associations were closely linked to specific occupations, like the association of razor fish drainers who dedicated an inscription to Theos Hypsistos.²⁶³ These groups, sharing the same occupation, would have been of the same social status. From the names on the inscription, it can be said that the Jews of Aphrodisias were of diverse social status.

Face B gives the occupations of people as well as their names. It becomes obvious that some *theosebeis* held positions which potentially would cause conflict with religious law. A certain Παράμονος is listed as being an ἱκονογράφος, icon writer.²⁶⁴ Jews generally were not involved in the production of religious images because such work might be construed as idolatry. Some provision was made in rabbinic law for Jews to work in the trade of icons for the wider market, but there are contradictory laws which prohibit it.²⁶⁵ Whether any such law affected *theosebeis* cannot be determined from this inscription. It does seem that occupations such as this did not affect the assimilation of *theosebeis* into the life of the Jewish community. Another *theosebes*, Ἀδόλιος, is listed as an ἰσικιάριος, a maker of mincemeat.²⁶⁶ Unless this man used only ritually slaughtered meat in the production of his

²⁶¹ Especially those that were guilds, ie., workplace or occupation related associations. These included members from only those occupations, who necessarily were the same social status.

²⁶² 1 Corinthians 11.20-22. This passage shows the issues that arose when people of different social statuses began to live in communion. Some ate while others went hungry.

²⁶³ See above.

²⁶⁴ Line 57 face B. Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 57 suggest an alternative of ἱκονοποιός, icon maker. Both have similar functions and would have been involved in icon production.

²⁶⁵ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 57.

²⁶⁶ Line 51 face B.

meat products then he would be unable to keep an important Jewish law. If it were a problem, then it was unlikely the name and offensive occupation would be recorded on such a significant monument.

Reynolds and Tannenbaum correlate the position of *theosebeis* in relationship with the synagogue to that of Christian initiates who at least in the fourth century delayed baptism until maturity or near to death, and to initiates of mystery cults such as Mithraism.²⁶⁷ Christian initiates and μύσται of pagan mystery religions were not properly *in* the cult, but existed at the edges. This may be compared to *theosebeis* who were not full Jews and could only gain full Jewish status through circumcision and complete adherence to the law. The *theosebeis* were therefore not an unusual group within Graeco-Roman culture.

7.10.2 Interpretation of the inscription

The Aphrodisias inscription is an invaluable resource which provides insight into the life of the Jewish community in that city and its significant degree of assimilation into mainstream Hellenistic culture. Aphrodisias was a pagan cultural centre. The city supported a school of sculpture and marble carving of a very sophisticated standard.²⁶⁸ A very large amount of statuary and statue fragments have been found during various levels of excavations, including trial and unfinished products. This, in addition to the significant cultic temple of Aphrodite, indicates that the city was embedded deeply in pagan cultural traditions.

There was a substantial Jewish community in Aphrodisias which was well known enough to have city councillors as members of its associated god-worshipping community. This indicates that the Jewish

²⁶⁷ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 87-8.

²⁶⁸ Erim, *Aphrodisias*, 69-70. The school appears to have functioned from between the first century BCE to the end of the fifth century CE.

community stood as an accepted part of the life of the city. It also indicates that the Jews themselves were open to relationships that served the benefit of their community and integrated them within the mainstream culture, whilst preserving the integrity of their core group distinctions. The *theosebeis* at Aphrodisias enabled the assimilation of Jews through the public positions some *theosebeis* held, and the influence these had in promoting the Jewish way of life.

The memorial inscription, which was erected to celebrate the giving of funds sufficient to set up the *patella* was a visible reminder of the presence of the Jewish community and its function within the city. This was certainly no persecuted or marginal community. The Jewish people spoke Greek,²⁶⁹ engaged in regular occupations within the city. As in other cities, such as Sardis and Akmonia, the Jewish complement of the city was a significant contributor to its cosmopolitan makeup. The Jews were also open enough that some pagans were attracted to the religious qualities of Judaism and became *theosebeis*, some even moving over to full conversion.

The two faces of the inscription give us names, positions and trade designations of 71 Jews, including three proselytes, and 54 *theosebeis*.²⁷⁰ The description of trades of both Jews and *theosebeis* gives some indication that Jews in Aphrodisias were employed in similar ways and held similar occupations to non-Jews.²⁷¹

The omission of women's names in the lists is unusual. Women feature in other Jewish inscriptions of the period. The practical and charitable

²⁶⁹ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 22 suggest that neither the inscribers of the stele nor those who commissioned it knew Hebrew – at least not sufficiently to apply the language to the monument. This correlates with other evidence of Jews living in Asia Minor in the imperial period. After c. 400 CE Hebrew became more widely known again, possibly even under compulsion, according to Reynolds and Tannenbaum.

²⁷⁰ There are also Jews and *theosebeis* named on the inscription who do not have a trade listed after their names.

²⁷¹ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 128.

function of the *patella* would seem to invite the benefaction of wealthy women, whether Jewish or not. Kapetolina from Tralles and Julia Severa from Akmonia are well known examples of women benefactors to Jewish communities.

The number of *theosebeis* appears to be disproportionately high, and it is right to ask why this is so. What the inscription does not say is as important as what it does say. There are names and positions absent in this inscription which might otherwise be expected. The inscription itself is not necessarily representative of the whole Jewish community of the city.²⁷² It may only be a smaller group – perhaps even a group which sat at the edges of, or even beyond, the authority of the synagogue. The lack of names of synagogue officials, including elders and the ἀρχισύνναγωγος, the leader of the synagogue, indicates this possibility. The group who set up the stele may have been a rival group. Given that conflict and confrontation was a result of a developing new religious situation, it is possible that a state of rivalry existed between Jewish groups in Aphrodisias. Pagan traditions were well embedded in Aphrodisias, and some Jews may have retreated into more introverted groups, while others adapted to perceived advantages in being part of the city structure.

The inclusion of so many *theosebeis* in this inscription may have been the result of the activities of a group of Jews who were of a ‘new’ type. Such groups had more active boundaries. The space of acculturation and integration of groups like this were more permeable to the influences of Hellenisation. Was it a non-traditional group more open to assimilation than others, who commissioned the stele at Aphrodisias?

²⁷² Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 124 flag this caution.

The number of transliterated Latin names of *theosebeis* in the inscription who were also city councillors is also quite high.²⁷³ This indicates the influence of Roman officials (perhaps not approved of by synagogue officials and senior members), and a high number of Roman visitors to the city, including soldiers.²⁷⁴

Even if the stele was set up by a minority group within the wider Jewish community in Aphrodisias, from face A at least it may be said that the group was concerned to maintain the Jewish traditions of studying law, taking biblical names.²⁷⁵ The presence of the *theosebeis* in a disproportionately high number on face B of the inscription might mean that the religious situation which enabled pagan monotheism to be expressive was well alive in Aphrodisias.

The *theosebeis* came from the cultural mainstream, or from other minority groups, into the assimilating edges of Judaism. They came from different social strata of Aphrodisian society. They were significantly open in their association with the Jewish community that their names appear on a monument recording their donation to a Jewish service. Even if the stele was placed within the synagogue it would still have been open for non-Jews to view.²⁷⁶ This indicates that these people were comfortable with their association with the Jewish community.

The presence of the nine *theosebeis* who were βουλευταί, city councillors, provided status to the Jewish community, and possibly some security of position.²⁷⁷

²⁷³ From among the θεοσεβεῖς, line 35 (Τέρτυλλος), line 36 (Ζήνων Λογγιανού), line 38 (Ρωμανός) face B.

²⁷⁴ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 125.

²⁷⁵ Note examples of biblical names of Jews in the *dekania* on face A of the inscription: line 9 Ἰαηλ, line 10 Ἰωσοῦα, line 13, 21, 26 and margin Σαμουηλ, line 14, 17 Ἰωσῆς, line 15 Βενιαμιν, line 16 Ἰούδας.

²⁷⁶ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 125.

²⁷⁷ Reynolds and Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers*, 126.

The discovery of the inscribed stele at Aphrodisias has provided much information on Jew-pagan interrelationships. It was a fortunate find and because such finds are rare in archaeological discoveries, it is not possible to say one way or another if Aphrodisias was a community where Jews assimilated more readily than other Asian cities. At Aphrodisias however, through the value of this inscription, and whilst maintaining the cautions already indicated, it is possible to claim that Jews were well assimilated into the life of Aphrodisias. They had a viable community which had associate members interested enough in the religious monotheism of Judaism that they studied the scriptures, took up certain aspects of the Jewish law, donated significant funds to further the work of the Jewish community, and were not afraid to publicly proclaim their association.

7.11 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have considered the evidence of Theos Hypsistos using the parameters of geographical proximity to Asia Minor and indications of ritual practice. Examples of evidence which are exceptions to these parameters have been used to highlight important information about cult activity. I have taken the conclusions drawn from the previous chapters on the wider cultural environment, the religious situation, the indications of pagan monotheism, and applied them in this chapter to a study of evidence of the following of one, highest god. Throughout this chapter I have examined the evidence (mostly inscriptional) of Theos Hypsistos in its various forms, and in its relationship with other gods, including the Jewish god. I have then looked at the assimilating crossover between pagan monotheism and Judaism, and found a space where this was given expression. This space is notably evident in the *theosebeis* of Aphrodisias, as discerned through a major inscription.

In summary, worship of Theos Hypsistos, the highest god, represented monotheism which crossed religious boundaries. Jews and some pagans approached god as *hypsistos*. The substantial amount of evidence of Theos Hypsistos in Asia Minor between the first and the third centuries CE suggests that its phenomena emerged from a common cultural environment.

In the next chapter, I view the evidence Theos Hypsistos devotion within the spectrum of pagan monotheism and at the edges of Judaism, in the context of pagan oracle production. I consider from within the corpus of pagan oracles those oracles which offer theological insight on the nature of god as a means of disseminating monotheistic ideas.

8. THE VOICE OF THE ORACLE

In this chapter, I move from a discussion of Theos Hypsistos as a highest god of pagan monotheism with assimilating edges into Judaism, to a study of pagan oracles as a response to the new religious situation in Asia Minor. In this thesis, it is the small group of theological oracles which expressed pagan monotheism which are of interest here.¹

Within pagan religious traditions oracles were a means of communication between the divine realm and human beings. The people received the communication issued through an oracle as the voice of a god. As pagan religion held little written doctrine, the surviving oracles give a unique perspective on the way pagans understood the gods. The theological oracles from Asia Minor had a role in defining the nature of god which crossed cultural groups. The question, 'Who is god?' emerged from the cultural environment and preceded the theological responses.² The oracle responses were given at places where pagans believed the god would hear and answer them.

In the following sections of this chapter I describe oracles and their function in pagan religion. I then discuss Apollo as a god of prophecy and the assimilation of the god and his cults in Asia Minor. I then set out the oracle industry, including the important sites, the processes of consultation with the oracle, the types of messages received, their interpretation and dissemination. A case study of the theological oracle from Oinoanda in Lykia in southwestern Asia Minor forms part of the

¹ The main evidence discussed in this chapter is the Oinoanda oracle. I also discuss the theological oracle contained in Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1.18.19-21. See further the sources cited in this chapter, section 8.6.

² As found in a version of the theological oracle from Oinoanda, sourced in Lactantius *Divine Institutions* 1.7.1 ὅτι Θεοφίλου τινὸς τοῦνομα τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα ἐρωτήσαντος, σὺ εἶ θεὸς ἢ ἄλλος, ἔχρησεν οὕτως: *a certain person by the name of Theophilus asked Apollo, 'Are you god or another? He thus pronounced an oracle.*

discussion. In the next chapter, this oracle will be analysed alongside a Christian hymn from the Letter to the Kolossians which provides another definition of god.³ This analysis will explore whether the definitions of god contained in each example emerge from the same cultural environment, draw upon similar formulations and experiences to express a highest god.

8.1 Oracles in pagan religion

In Graeco-Roman religion an oracle is both a mouthpiece of a god and it is the communication via the mouthpiece, the words and messages of that god. An oracle is both a physical site, and it is the words received. These two things are connected. Responses of the oracle given by the god came through the medium of a prophet situated in a place in which prophetic communication traditionally occurred.⁴ Parke describes an oracle as: “a formal statement from a god, usually given in answer to an enquiry, or else the place where such an enquiry could be made.”⁵ In terms of describing the difference between ‘oracle’ as the response received by the prophet, and the site of the oracle itself, I will use the word ‘oracle’ to mean the divine communication, and ‘oracle centre’ to mean the place where this happened.⁶

³ Kol. 1.15-20.

⁴ Exceptions may occur in certain forms of inductive divination, such as the drawing of lots to receive an answer to a question. This type of prophetic communication is not connected to a physical place. Prophecy through the drawing of lots happened at the oracle centre of Apollo at Hierapolis. Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 181. It is how people sometimes determined the will of a god in processes such as political elections. See B. C. Dietrich, “Reflections on the Origins of the Oracular Apollo,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London* 25 (1978): 1; and on inductive divination, Robert Flacelière, *Greek Oracles*, trans. Douglas Garman, (London: Elek Books, 1965), 2-4. Even so, the annual election of the prophet at the physical site of Didyma was taken by lot, and Apollo was believed to have chosen his prophet via that means. Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 46.

⁵ H. W. Parke, *Greek Oracles* (London: Hutchinson University Press, 1967), 9.

⁶ Joseph Fontenrose, *Didyma: Apollo's Oracle, Cult, and Companion* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1988), 3, distinguishes the two as he did in his earlier publication, *The Delphic Oracle: Its Responses and Operations with a Catalogue of Responses* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1978), by using a capital letter to identify a site (Oracle), and the lower-case word (oracle) for

An oracle expressed the communication between a god and people. Specifically, an oracle responded to a question asked of a god, or advice sought, or prayers delivered. Those who consulted oracle centres could be individuals or envoys from cities. Private consultants were frequently concerned about health, prosperity, good fortune. Cities requested directions in public affairs from the god, the sanctioning of statutes, treaties, and business initiatives. Oracle communication belonged to the traditions of pagan religion from its earliest days. The Greek tragic poet Aischylos powerfully describes the overwhelming experience of oracle communication and its implications for human beings:

Κασάνδρα Ἄπολλον, Ἄπολλον
 ἀγυιάτ', ἀπόλλων ἐμός.
 ἀπώλεσας γὰρ οὐ μόλις τὸ δεύτερον...
O Apollo, Apollo
guardian of the streets,⁷ laying me waste.
For you have quite utterly destroyed me...

Κασάνδρα ἰοὺ ἰού, ὦ ὦ κακά.
 ὑπ' αὐτὸν με δεινὸς ὀρθομαντείας πόνος
 στοβεῖ ταρασσῶν φροιμίους δυσφροιμίους.⁸
Woe, woe, O, O terrible things.
Again the fearful toil of true prophecy⁹
abuses me, stirring up openings to unlucky
preludes.

In these short passages from Aischylos' fifth century BCE tragedy *Agamemnon*, the power and effect of the voice of the oracle is obviously

the response. I think this has the potential to become confusing to readers, especially at sentence beginnings, and will not follow this convention.

⁷ The cult of Apollo Ἄγυιεύς, Apollo as god of the streets or ways, was known in Asia Minor in Halikarnassos, *IG*. 2, Berollini (1895), 2261. The epithet refers to the god's role in urban community, emphasising his hellenistic character. See Daniel Robert Miller, "The Origin and Original Nature of Apollo," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1939), 46.

⁸ Aischylos *Agamemnon* 1080-83, 1214-16.

⁹ Referring to the experience of a genuine prophet/*mantis*, the ὀρθόμαντις, not the charlatan type, the ψευδόμαντις, nor even the temple staff involved in the process of conveying responses to clients.

felt by the ill-fated Kasandra, prophet of Apollo. Kasandra had been given the prophetic sight, and has been utterly overwhelmed by the god. Kasandra, a classical Greek prophet sung by Homeric bards,¹⁰ and here in Aischylos' poem, has been Apollo's vessel, the carrier of his word to human beings anxious to hear the god speak. The process consumed her and she has resigned herself to fate and inevitable death. Kasandra is the mouthpiece of Apollo, the utterer of the god's oracles. She is his μάντις, *mantis*, one who serves as a vessel of communication between the god and people. Kasandra is blessed with Apollo's gift even as in this piece of famous Attic tragedy the god curses her.¹¹

Kasandra's experience reflects the attitude of awe and humility before the power of the divine that has already been discussed.¹² Awe and humility and the powerlessness graphically expressed by Aischylos were how Graeco-Romans felt towards a god and under the influence of a god.

Oracle centres continued in importance through the centuries into the imperial era.¹³ Oracle centres adapted to the changes in the cultural environment, especially the religious situation, survived and flourished.¹⁴ In Asia Minor oracle centres were important spiritual places where the weight of Greek religious tradition melded with the

¹⁰ *Iliad* 24.697-706; *Odyssey* 11.405-434.

¹¹ Kasandra was the daughter of Priam, king of Troy. Her brother was Paris, whose lust for the beautiful Helen instigated the Trojan war. Kasandra became the object of Apollo's desire, and when she refused to have sexual relations with him the god cursed her. She continued to have the gift of true prophetic sight (ὀρθομαντεία), but was cursed by the disbelief of those who heard her words. This caused her torment, the knowledge that the god was punishing her, and by extension, those who would not understand the truth of the prophetic words she spoke.

¹² Kraabel, "Ἰψιστος," 82-4.

¹³ In Asia Minor, Klaros and Didyma are especially notable for their ongoing viability in the imperial era.

¹⁴ Especially Klaros, which as Parke, *Greek Oracles*, 140 says, moved with religious thought and changes.

new needs of people, their desires to understand the divine and their own places in the universe.

In the improved social and economic conditions of the Roman Empire in the second century CE people were freer to explore their spiritual consciousness.¹⁵ The desire for a more individualised relationship with the divine, which accompanied the religious situation, brought a different perspective in people seeking divine assistance. The oracle centres fulfilled a need in people¹⁶ that arose out of the experiences of living in this environment.

Belief in divine providence was the basis of belief in oracles. Although there were varying degrees of seriousness with which people took oracles,¹⁷ there was nonetheless widespread faith in and obedience to divine commands. This aspect of pagan piety is evident in the analysis of confession texts which I have undertaken. In the confessions people responded to the command of a god to publicly make known their misdeed, make the necessary atonement, and give honour to the punishing god. Obedience is evident in the number of confession steles which survive.

Oracles provide evidence of human reliance on god. People consulted oracles over many and varied things, from seeking good fortune for crops¹⁸ to aversion of plague.¹⁹ From the different types of oracles may be discerned a recognition that human beings felt their means of

¹⁵ Parke, *Greek Oracles*, 141.

¹⁶ Parke, *Greek Oracles*, 123-24.

¹⁷ Aristodokos reproached the oracle in Herodotos; Oinomaïos the Cynic expressed dissatisfaction with receiving an oracle response which someone else had been given. Eusebios *Praep. Ev.* 5.21-6.23.

¹⁸ A. Souter, *Cl. Rev.* 11 (1897), 31; A. Petrie in W. Ramsay, *Studies in the History and Art of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 128, 200, on a local family enquiring of a method to ensure prosperity of crops.

¹⁹ Three plague oracles of Klaros comes from Pergamon, Kallipolis and Caesarea Troketta – K. Buresch (1889), 101 ff.; *IGRR* 4.1498.

controlling their lives was limited. Fate, or destiny, really was in the hands of the gods.

8.2 Apollo as god of prophecy

The prophetic function of Apollo was his most widely accessed role in antiquity. It is recalled in popular discourse even today. Oracle centres in Asia Minor remain as imposing archaeological features in the landscape.²⁰ Literary references affirm the significance which the ancients placed upon the message and meaning of oracles.²¹ The ubiquitous inscriptional evidence of oracle responses contributes to our understanding of the value people placed in prophecy and the authority of Apollo in antiquity.

In most of the oracle centres throughout the ancient world Apollo was the main god honoured, the one from whom the prophetic word was received. Apollo's prominence in the prophetic role is affirmed through the evidence of the sites.²² Oracle centres of Apollo and the prophesying cults of Apollo at these sites were spread throughout the Graeco-Roman world.²³ Everywhere that his cult spread, throughout mainland Greece and Asia Minor, features of local, indigenous cults

²⁰ Tourist websites promote Klaros and Didyma as 'must see' places to visit in Turkey. The vast archaeological site of Didyma, with its imposing twelve columned pronaos still stands, despite its ruined state, as a testimony to the importance of the oracle centres in Asia Minor.

²¹ Examples from classical Greek authors abound. The opening scene of Euripides *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, where the priest Kalchas, enquiring about the readiness of Agamemnon's ships to sail to Troy, received the response that the success of the voyage required the ritual sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter Iphigeneia. This scene sets up the significance of the messages received from the gods in Greek tradition.

²² From the site of Didyma in Asia Minor, there are an extant record of 61 responses, 36 of which are considered authentic Apolline oracles. All but three of these are inscriptions. The evidence from Didyma exceeds all other centres except Delphi in number of surviving oracles. Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 173.

²³ Outside of Asia Minor, major oracle centres of Apollo existed at Delphi and Delos in Greece.

and oracle centres became acculturated into the universal, Hellenistic Apollo.²⁴

Apollo was not only a god of prophecy. Like other figures of Graeco-Roman religion he operated in many spheres of divine influence.²⁵

When I was a child I read colourfully illustrated mythologies of Ancient Greece and Rome and I learned that Apollo was a sun god who drove his golden chariot across the sky bringing light and daytime to the world beneath his realm.²⁶ The discs of the chariot were the sun, and the god drove the sun chariot with magnificent horses from the east to the west. When the journey was completed each day and the fire of his passing over, Apollo's sister Artemis (or Diana of Roman mythology as I knew her then), would drive her silver chariot across the sky allowing cool darkness to cover the face of the world, lit by the beautiful silver discs of the moon, her chariot wheels.

This one thread of myth reveals the nature of Apollo as a god of the high heavens, bringer of light, master of the sun, in relationship to divine sister Artemis,²⁷ herself identified as the moon, even if in a

²⁴ Dietrich, "Reflections on the Origins of the Oracular Apollo," 5, who refers to this process as "contamination" of sites. I prefer to use terms associated with assimilation when considering the cultural crossover between Hellenistic and indigenous aspects because of the negative associations with the word 'contamination' and the elitist notion of pure versus unclean.

²⁵ Marcel Detienne, "Forgetting Delphi Between Apollo and Dionysus," *Classical Philology* 96 no. 2 (2001): 148, says myths may lose meaning when gods are endowed with actions and attributes that are specific and unchanging. The result he says, is: "static pantheons inhabited by agent-gods." Examples are Apollo as sun god, Dionysos as wine god. Cultural assimilation of the gods to the environments in which they inhabited preserved the richness and depth of pagan religion, including the adaptation of gods to new situations as they moved with the people. Despite what our modern mind may think, the gods adapted to many functions.

²⁶ Miller, "The Origin and Original Nature of Apollo," 26 names a general identification of Apollo with Helios, a sun god. Connections may be made here with Theos Hypsistos, whose dwelling is in the highest ether and to whom an oracle of Apollo prescribes worship toward the ascending sun. See oracle of Oinoanda study below. The Apollo-Helios connection in Asia Minor is noted mostly in the third century CE.

²⁷ Apollo and Artemis were identified as siblings in Hesiod *Theogony* 918. The pair were unified in worship in Asia Minor, sharing sanctuary space. See Miller, "The Origin and Original Nature of Apollo," 65. A colossal statue of Artemis was found in the main temple at Klaros, along with the cult statue of Apollo and another of Leto.

homogenised children's book of Greek and Roman mythology. This is the same god who ruled the oracle centres and communicated through his prophet to the people who worshipped him, who came to him for answers, wisdom, hope. Elsewhere we learn that Apollo was a bringer of plague as well as an averter from danger,²⁸ a healer,²⁹ a god of music,³⁰ a guardian of streets,³¹ among many other identifications.

This multiplicity of roles and areas of influence might at first appear contradictory. In places Apollo is a celestial god,³² in others a chthonic god.³³ A god of healing and a god who delivers plague do not appear to be complementary.³⁴ Neither does a god of the streets and ways and a wolf god³⁵ seem to have any connection. However, these seeming contradictions are representative of the diversity of pagan polytheism,

²⁸ *Iliad* 1.44 ff., in which Homer acknowledges Apollo as sender and averter of disease. This is summarised in the general epithet Ἀλεξικάκος, as in Pausanias 1.3.4. Miller, "The Origin and Original Nature of Apollo," 53 and elsewhere thinks this is an important designation and reflects the primary nature of Apollo. Interestingly, Apollo in northwestern Asia Minor was revered as Σμίνθευς, mouse god, at Chyrsa, Strabo 13.1.47-8 and Tenedos, Strabo 13.1.46. Mice were carved into cult statues of the god. Miller, 36 suggests that Apollo became known as sender and averter of mouse plagues.

²⁹ Apollo is known by the epithet Ἀκέσιος, from ἀκέομαι, to heal or cure, in Pausanias 6.24.6; as Ἴατρός, physician, in Lykophron *Kassandra* 1207, and Aristophanes *Aves* 585; and as Ἴατρομαντις, physician and seer, in Aischylos *Eumenides* 62.

³⁰ *Odyssey* 8.488; Hesiod *Theogony* 94-5. The cult statue of Apollo at Klaros depicts the god with a lyre.

³¹ Aischylos *Agamemnon* 1082; Pausanias 1.31.6.

³² The celestial aspect of Apollo is preserved by Homer in his poems: Apollo is Φοῖβος *Phoibos*, or Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων, *Phoibos Apollon*. This description means 'bright,' 'radiant,' fitting a god whose realm is the high heavens. Cook, *Zeus*, Vol. 2, 500 says *Phoibos Apollon* as presented in Homer, is the original name of the god. He also says that the name may refer to any god of the bright, shining sky, not only Apollo. Miller, "The Origin and Original Nature of Apollo," 51 affirms that in Apollo's original nature he was a celestial god.

³³ Pausanias *Description of Greece* 10.32.6. Pausanias describes a cave dwelling Apollo – an uncharacteristically chthonic state, who fills with an ecstasy of madness those who tend the trees near his cave when they touch his cult statue. They then riot in the tree groves before entering the nearby city of Magnesia, where they meet Dionysos in the agora. See Detienne, "Forgetting Delphi," 153.

³⁴ Miller, "The Origin and Original Nature of Apollo," 39 alerts us to the ancient perspective of illness and disease being caused by the displeasure of a god. A placated god would therefore remove the disease. There is a connection, even if illogical to modern thinking. Again, the process which brought about the confession steles in Asia Minor may be related to this attitude.

³⁵ Apollo as Λύκειος, an epithet derived from λύκος, wolf, is found in Pausanias 1.19.3; 2.9.7; 2.19.3.

of links which from a post-enlightenment perspective are not easily made. The many functions of Apollo show that the god adapted to the context of the people who worshipped and served him. The many names and roles of Apollo reflect the capacity of his cults for assimilation. They provide insight into the richness of pagan polytheism. In its many forms with its many gods with multiple functions and the capacity for change, polytheism was never static, despite the seeming unmoving character of embedded religious traditions.³⁶

Apollo's significant role in polytheistic religion aside, in this chapter I locate Apollo as god of prophecy in the context of pagan monotheism. In a monotheistic context, Apollo was not himself the highest god, but was part of the hierarchical structure that enabled the highest god to be known to the human world and through whom access to the highest god made possible.

Miller's study of Apollo in his various roles and guises informs the apparent contradictions and multiple manifestations of the god, and help us to view these as an assimilative process as the god moved with the people who honoured him. In this early and comprehensive study Miller establishes first the geographical origin of Apollo.³⁷ He then seeks to discover the original nature of the god through analysis of the various functions of Apollo evident in epithets in literature and epigraphy, monuments, and location of evidence. Miller concludes that the original nature of Apollo can be discerned through the sources naming Apollo. The original nature distinguishes the essential entity of the god from the multiple representations of the god as received and

³⁶ North, "Development of Religious Pluralism," 178-9 describes the embeddedness of traditional pagan religion.

³⁷ Miller, "The Origin and Original Nature of Apollo," 16 determines that the god originated in Hyperborea (a generic designation for a land in the north), before migrating with the people to Greece, then Asia. Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 172, and Parke, "Oracles of Apollo," 183, both prefer an Asian ancestry, based on the prominent place in the ancient world of the Asian oracle centres.

known in human communities. A weakness of Miller's thesis is his methodological limitation of discounting any function as being original to the nature of the god unless it can be proven to share in the northern ancestry of Apollo. This limitation obscures important aspects of the god such as prophecy, which was a dominant function in Asia.

The movement through the layers of myth, the many aspects of Apollo, leads to the prophetic role which is of interest here. Prophecy was attributed to the god through his association with music, his mastery over animals,³⁸ and his role as ἀλεξικάκος, averter and protector. People considered the gift of music, like prophecy, to be directly influenced by a god.³⁹ Animals were used in divination, linking them with primitive prophecy.⁴⁰ As averter and protector, Apollo was the deity to whom prayer for aversion of disease must be offered and appeasement sought when disease had been sent.⁴¹ This developed into the prophetic function of the god.

Prophecy was a universal phenomenon among the gods and therefore it is complex tracing this function to the original nature of Apollo.⁴² Other gods had oracles. Herodotos reports that the oracle of Zeus at Dodona was the oldest and at one time only, oracle in Greece.⁴³ The title χρηστήριος, oracular, prophetic, is applicable to any god from whose shrine came the successful interpretation of omens, divinations

³⁸ This aspect of Apollo is reflected in his identification as archer, *Iliad* 9.404, which is both a war and a hunting epithet. With the bow, Apollo tamed animals. He is also known as Σμίνθευς, mouse, Strabo 13.1.47-8; Λύκειος, wolf, both protector of herds and enemy and destroyer of wolves, Pausanias 2.9.6, Miller, "The Origin and Original Nature of Apollo," 36-7; Δελφίνιος, dolphin, Strabo 4.1.4.

³⁹ *Homeric Hymn to Muses and Apollo* 25.2; *Homeric Hymn to Artemis* 27.15; Pindar *Pythian Odes* 1.2,12; 5.59.

⁴⁰ For example, Cicero *De Divinatione* 1.2 on the use of animals in the quest for prophetic sight.

⁴¹ Reinhold Merkelbach and Josef Stauber, "Die Orakel des Apollon von Klaros," *EA* 27 (1996): 11-13, no. 4; M. L. West, "Oracles of Apollo Kareios. A Revised Text," *ZPE* 1 (1967): 184-85 no. 2b is in response to plague. This oracle will be set out and studied further below.

⁴² Miller, "The Origin and Original Nature of Apollo," 43.

⁴³ Herodotos 2.52.

and ecstatic utterances. In Asia Minor, there were indigenous oracle centres in existence before the arrival of Apollo. It may well be that the success of Apollo's oracles authorised his claim to prophecy, rather than prophecy being an original function of the god. Whether original to the nature of the god or otherwise, prophecy must have become a dominant function early on, certainly as Apollo manifested throughout Asia Minor.

8.3 The assimilation of Apollo in Asia Minor

The changing profile of Apollo as his cults spread through Asia Minor shows that gods and their followers were subject to the cultural processes of assimilation. I take the position that Apollo was a late comer to Asia Minor whose cults assimilated and adapted to the cultural environment.⁴⁴ Through the early pre-common era as groups of people migrated into Greece and beyond, they brought their culture and religions.⁴⁵ Through the migratory processes gods and people were closely connected. As Apollo moved into Asia Minor he took over the functions of local gods. In Asia Minor, cult fusion occurred at sites where there were prophetic traditions associated with local gods.⁴⁶

Apollo was always a superior deity to the indigenous gods, even if not the highest. As such he usurped the roles of the indigenous gods in the communities in which he arrived. The result of pandemic Apollo's

⁴⁴ I say this after analysing Miller's evidence of the spread of Apollo's cult, in addition to the early take-over of Apollo of the centre of Delphi in Greece, and from texts such as contained in the much later third century CE Lactantius *Divine Institutions* 1.7 who names Apollo an invader: Apollo enim, quem praeter caeteros divinum, maximeque fatidicum existimant, Colophone respondens, quod Delphis emigraverat, amoenitate ductus Asiae – *Apollo indeed whom they think divine beyond others, and the greatest prophet, responding from Colophon, because he moved away from Delphi, being led by the pleasantness of Asia.*

⁴⁵ In the phase known as the 'Dorian invasion,' (possibly as early as the twelfth and eleventh centuries BCE) groups of people which included the culturally distinct Dorians, Aiolians and Ionians left the 'north' and entered Greece, the Mediterranean and Asia Minor. These people brought their gods and cults with them.

⁴⁶ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 180.

appearance for indigenous cults wherever he arrived was the fusing of cults and appending of indigenous epithets to the Hellenistic name of Apollo. The fusing of cults occurred in processes that were concurrent with the fusing of cultures: Helladic Greece, Krete, Asia Minor and the cultures of the early northern invaders.⁴⁷ This meant that cult fusion happened much earlier than the period discussed in this study. If as I understand, Apollo came to Asia with the incoming people from beyond Asia Minor in the period of cultural fusion, then cults of Apollo in Asia Minor had already undergone significant processes of assimilation by the beginning of the first century CE. I also note the ongoing nature of assimilative processes, and that initial assimilation of Apollo with resident indigenous deities continued to develop as the human cultural environments adapted to changes over time.

8.4 Apollo at Hierapolis

An example of the assimilation of the Hellenistic Apollo with an indigenous oracle centre and the fusing of cults is shown at Hierapolis. Hierapolis in Phrygia was known for its hot underground waters and its *χαρόνειον*, *charoneion*, or *πλουτόνιον*, *ploutonion*, a cavern filled with toxic vapours.⁴⁸ This was viewed in antiquity as an entrance to the underworld. Both Strabo⁴⁹ and Cassius Dio⁵⁰ attest to the toxicity of vapours emitted from the aperture after throwing birds into the vapour to see if they died. By the end of the fifth century CE the philosopher Damaskios visited the site and reported that the aperture had been built over, and that a temple of Apollo covered it.⁵¹ The

⁴⁷ Miller, “The Origin and Original Nature of Apollo,” 12.

⁴⁸ Iamblichos *De Mysteriis* 4.1; Pliny *Natural History* 2.207; Cicero *De Divinatione* 1.79.

⁴⁹ Strabo 13.4.14 mentions the deaths of bulls and birds, (and interestingly, the enduring capacity of Gallic eunuchs!).

⁵⁰ Cassius Dio 68.27.2-4 on the death of every living thing that encountered the *πνεῦμα δεινόν*, terrible vapour.

⁵¹ Damaskios ap. Phot. *Bibl.* 344B 35.

report of Damaskios was confirmed by excavations of the site in 1963.⁵² More recent excavations at Hierapolis also confirm the ancient account.⁵³ An early third century CE temple was discovered built over Hellenistic foundations, with the aperture present.

At Hierapolis the meeting of the indigenous Kareios with the Hellenistic Apollo happened and oracles were delivered in the name of Apollo Kareios,⁵⁴ then later, Lairbenos.⁵⁵ The temple of Apollo Lairbenos near Hierapolis was a site with a cluster of evidence on public confessions.⁵⁶ As I am seeking evidence for pagan monotheism in this study, I link the proximity of the confession steles, which I have previously connected with monotheistic attitudes and practices⁵⁷ to the oracle centre at Hierapolis as further building a context for the development of pagan monotheism.

There exist inscriptions of a prophetic tradition of Apollo at Hierapolis, but no literary references.⁵⁸ Several inscriptional sources connect Apollo at Hierapolis with Klaros.⁵⁹ These inscriptions refer both to Apollo in relation to Kareios and to Klarios. However, it was the Apollo who was initially connected with Delphi who came to Hierapolis.⁶⁰ The

⁵² Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 181. The archaeological reports on the excavations are in G. Carettoni, "Scavo del tempio di Apollo a Hierapolis (Rapporto Preliminare)," *Ann. Sc. Arch. Atene*, 61-62 (1963/4): 411-33; J. M. Cook and J. D. Blackman, *Archaeological Reports for 1970-71*; E. Akurgal, *Ancient Civilizations and Ruins of Turkey*, (Istanbul, 1969).

⁵³ See report by Francesco D'Andria, "Hierapolis of Phrygia: Its Evolution in Hellenistic and Roman Times," *JRA Supplementary Series* 45 (2001): 96-115. Excavations at Hierapolis are ongoing.

⁵⁴ Merkelbach and Stauber, 11, no. 4 line 16 refers to Kareios, but not as giver of advice in this instance. Rather his inclusion is to provide what Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 234 describes as, "a touch of civic flattery."

⁵⁵ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 183.

⁵⁶ Riel, "A Forgotten Confession-Inscription," 36.

⁵⁷ In Chapter Five.

⁵⁸ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 171. The inscriptions on reused stones were found in the walls of the third century CE temple of Apollo. One inscription is dated the late second to early first centuries BCE. Merkelbach and Stauber, 11-16, nos. 3-7 contain inscriptions found at Hierapolis. See also West, "Oracles of Apollo Kareios," 183-7, including bibliography.

⁵⁹ Merkelbach and Stauber, 11, 14, 15 nos. 4, 5, 6.

⁶⁰ Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 234 – through an early Seleukid colony. Events such as Pythian games were celebrated at Hierapolis. A significant inscription from

Klaros-Hierapolis connection was likely to have occurred through the rise in prominence of the cult of Apollo Klarios through exposure of the people of Hierapolis to the wider environment through trade, travel, political movements.⁶¹

When Apollo arrived at Hierapolis his Hellenistic identity took over the prophetic functions of the centre as a superior deity. This was the pattern of his arrival at indigenous religious sites. Features of the indigenous cults of Kareios and Lairbenos continued, fused with the Hellenistic Apollo, making the appearance of Apollo at Hierapolis unique, adapted for the communities which accessed the site.⁶²

Iconographically, the double axe reflects the indigenous Phrygian god, and the youthful Apollo with lyre reflects the Hellenistic Apollo.⁶³ The distinctiveness of Apollo at Hierapolis is shown in the types of oracles from the site. These were similar in style to those issued from Klaros and Didyma, but different in tone. The oracle already cited⁶⁴ which was a response to the widespread plague in Asia Minor, is particularly elusive, and Parke says, less formal.⁶⁵

Some texts from Hierapolis appear less sophisticated than those issued from the larger centres in Asia Minor. One of these included a generic, pre-made response for use by drawing lots. This, Parke says, was a feature of southwestern Asia Minor.⁶⁶ The response comprised of 24

Hierapolis, West, "Oracles of Apollo Kareios," 184-85 no. 2b; Merkelbach and Stauber, 11-13 no. 4, provide details of the wrath of the gods, especially Gaia, at the slaying of Python, affirming a connection with the oracle centre of Delphi.

⁶¹ Yet Hierapolis does not appear to be a regular client of the oracle at Klaros.

⁶² I am unconvinced that Apollo Kareios was worshipped alongside the Hellenistic, or "classical" Apollo, as Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 47 suggests happened at Hierapolis. Rather it was an assimilated Apollo who emerged at Hierapolis, overtaking the functions of Kareios, with both indigenous and Hellenistic characteristics. I base this on the record of the distinct oracular texts of Hierapolis, which were of a different tone than those given by the Hellenistic Apollo at Klaros and Didyma.

⁶³ Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 46-7.

⁶⁴ Merkelbach and Stauber, 11-13, no. 4; West, "Oracles of Apollo Kareios," 184-85 no. 2b.

⁶⁵ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 183.

⁶⁶ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 181.

sentences each of a single hexameter. The outcomes reported were vague – success, failure.⁶⁷ This type of oracle response may be likened to the horoscope section in the daily newspaper. No matter what star sign you happen to be, the same outcomes are predicted to happen.

The metrical construction for oracles from Hierapolis was hexameters. Hexameters, as will be discussed in the section below on an oracle of Apollo from Oinoanda, were the usual construction of response given consultants from oracle centres throughout Asia Minor.⁶⁸

This brief study of the appearance of the cult of Apollo at Hierapolis shows the assimilative capacity of an oracle centre in a changing cultural environment. The indigenous Kareios and Lairbenos were assimilated with the Hellenistic Apollo at Hierapolis. Features of Kareios and Lairbenos continued to serve the people who accessed the oracle centre for advice. The pattern of the fusion of these cults reflects the processes of Hellenisation, which as has been discussed, was tolerant of indigenous culture.⁶⁹ The geographical environment of the oracle centre at Hierapolis was also located where other practices associated with pagan monotheism have been documented.

8.5 Oracle centres in Asia Minor

The major two oracle centres in Asia Minor were Klaros and Didyma. Less well-known sites in Asia Minor included, apart from Hierapolis, Lagina, Panamara, Gryneion, Patara. In each of these places when the Hellenistic identity of Apollo occupied the sites, oracles were spoken in the name of Apollo. The most evidence of oracle centres in the Graeco-Roman world exists for the three sites of Delphi, Klaros and Didyma.

⁶⁷ Merkelbach and Stauber, 15, no. 7; Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 236.

⁶⁸ Not however, from Delphi.

⁶⁹ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 88.

Scholarship by Parke,⁷⁰ Fontenrose,⁷¹ and Flacelière⁷² is foundational to the study of oracles and oracle centres in the Graeco-Roman world. More recently, Aude Busine has produced several studies on the oracles of Apollo and the oracle centres.⁷³ Her *Paroles d'Apollon* is a comprehensive study of the three major oracle centres of Delphi, Didyma and Klaros, the oracle responses issued and the functioning of the sanctuaries.⁷⁴

In his *On the Mysteries*, the late third century CE writer Iamblichos names Delphi, Didyma and Klaros as the most well-known sites in the world.⁷⁵ Iamblichos comes at the end of the period studied here.⁷⁶ He is however, invaluable as a source on the practical functioning of oracle sites and processes. When he wrote the *On the Mysteries* it was about a century before the end of oracle activity in the major centres in Asia Minor.⁷⁷ The date Iamblichos wrote makes Busine think that he perceived a slowing down of the oracle centres. From this, she suggests that Iamblichos provides a theoretical interpretation of the divination process rather than an actual account.⁷⁸ This interpretation served his Neoplatonic philosophic point of view.⁷⁹

⁷⁰ Parke, *Greek Oracles* and *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor*.

⁷¹ Fontenrose, *Didyma, and Delphic Oracle*.

⁷² Flacelière, *Greek Oracles*.

⁷³ Aude Busine, *Paroles d'Apollon: Pratiques et traditions oraculaires dans l'antique tardive (II^e – VI^e siècle)*, Religions of the Graeco-Roman World 156 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005); and “La consultation de l’oracle d’Apollon dans le discours de Jamblique,” *Kernos* 15 (2002): 187-98.

⁷⁴ The date range, to the sixth century CE means some material is beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁷⁵ Τριῶν δὲ τούτων διωνύμων χρηστηρίων ἐμνημόνευσας, οὐχ ὅτι μόνα ἐνταῦθα, πολὺ γὰρ πλείονα ὑπῆρχε τὰ παραλειπόμενα· ἀλλ’ ἐπεὶ προεῖχε τῶν ἄλλων ταῦτα... καὶ ἡμεῖς οὖν περὶ τῶν τριῶν τούτων ποιησόμεθα λόγον, τὸν περὶ τῶν πολλῶν μαντείων λόγον ὑπερβάντες – *Having called to mind these three oracle centres (Klaros, Didyma and Delphi), but not only these, for there were many more which have been left out; but of these others... and therefore we have made an argument for these three, which surpass all other oracle places.*

⁷⁶ *On the Mysteries* was composed between 280-305 CE.

⁷⁷ Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 22.

⁷⁸ Busine, “La consultation,” 197.

⁷⁹ Busine, “La consultation,” 197.

Fontenrose however, thinks that there would have been little change in mantic operations in six centuries.⁸⁰ He can find no evidence to support any such change. If this is the case, Iamblichos' account may be considered most valuable in discerning oracle operations in Asia.

The writing of Iamblichos reflects a platonic philosophical conception of the universe with a hierarchical construction populated by levels of divine beings.⁸¹ His view is congruent with the philosophical background to pagan monotheism, which I have outlined in Chapter Six using Plato's *Timaios*.

Iamblichos was a Neoplatonist philosopher who differed from the major figures of the movement, Porphyry (d.305 CE) and Plotinus (d.270 CE), by his belief that contact with the divine could be achieved through the medium of theurgic rites, ceremonies and mysteries of initiation.⁸² Iamblichos was instrumental in moving Platonism from a philosophy to a religion. He emphasised this shift in his works by elevating theurgy, the use of religious ritual to demonstrate supernatural power, over theology.⁸³ This movement began to happen in the third century, and by the fourth century it had produced a sophisticated monotheistic religion which engaged with, and was at the same time in conflict with Christianity.⁸⁴

In Chapter Three of his *On the Mysteries*, Iamblichos provides extensive information not only on the oracle sites, but also the processes and means of oracular communication, which I will outline

⁸⁰ Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 79.

⁸¹ John T. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Iamblichos: On the Mysteries* Writings from the Greco-Roman World, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), xx writes of Iamblichos that he: "ramified hierarchy of levels of being (many identified with traditional gods and minor divinities), which is a feature of the later Athenian Platonism of Syrianus and Proclus."

⁸² *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, William Smith (ed.), (London: John Murray, 1873), heading under 'Iamblichus.' Accessed through Perseus Tufts Database.

⁸³ Fitzgerald, *Iamblichos: On the Mysteries*, xx-xxvii.

⁸⁴ Fitzgerald, *Iamblichos: On the Mysteries*, xxii says that Iamblichos took no notice of Christianity, while Porphyry was an active oponent.

below. Iamblichos drew on the material of Porphyry when compiling his account of oracular operations.⁸⁵ In his *Letter to Anebo*, Porphyry alludes to the oracle processes at Didyma, Klaros and Delphi, which Iamblichos is likely to have drawn on.⁸⁶ The *On the Mysteries* is possibly a response to Porphyry's letter.

When making use of Iamblichos in this discussion, I am mindful of his perspective as a philosopher, not an historian, in an environment when conflict between pagan cults and Christianity was beginning to appear.

8.5.1 Oracle centres at Klaros and Didyma

Both Klaros and Didyma are impressive physical sites. Klaros is located in Lydia, just inland near Kolophon, Magnesia and Smyrna. It is set in a deep river valley and surrounded by rich alluvial soil. A spring with waters reputed to have special properties, the source of prophetic inspiration, is located underneath.⁸⁷

Didyma is situated 15-20 kilometres from the city of Miletos, on the coast in Karia. It was built on top of a stony ridge which overlooked the sea. The site was huge and enclosed an entire village as well as a sacred grove. Most of the population of the village was involved in the workings of the centre. The source of prophetic inspiration at Didyma was also water, but unlike Klaros, the prophet inhaled the vapours from the water rather than drinking it.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Porphyry *Letter to Anebo* 14. See Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 79.

⁸⁶ Porphyry *Letter to Anebo* 5.

⁸⁷ Iamblichos *On the Mysteries* 3.11: οἱ δὲ ὕδωρ πίνοντες, καθάπερ ὁ ἐν κολοφῶνι ἱερεὺς τοῦ κλαρίου... τὸ δὴ ἐν κολοφῶνι μαντεῖον ὁμολογεῖται παρὰ πᾶσι δι' ὕδατος χρηματίζειν – *some drinking water, just like the priest of Klaros in Kolophon... it is agreed by all that the oracle centre in Kolophon gives response by means of water.*

⁸⁸ Iamblichos *On the Mysteries* 3.11: οἱ δ' ἐξ ὑδάτων ἀτμιζόμενοι, καθάπερ αἱ ἐν Βραγχίδαις προφήτιδες – *others inhaling vapour from the water, just like the female prophets in Branchidai.* Branchidai was the original name of the oracle centre at Didyma. The name referred to a priestly family which had authority over the temple and oracle functioning before 494 BCE when the Archaic temple was destroyed by

Klaros and Didyma were originally rural sanctuaries with indigenous prophetic gods inhabiting the sites. The centres became increasingly popular as sites of pilgrimage and prophetic consultation as the invading Hellenistic culture became dominant. Consequently, nearby Kolophon exercised governmental control over Klaros, and similarly Miletos gained governance over Didyma.⁸⁹

Imperial patronage benefitted these oracle centres publicly and financially.⁹⁰ Both Trajan⁹¹ (98-117 CE) and Hadrian (117-138 CE)⁹² became priests of the Didymaeian Apollo.⁹³ In the early third century with the encouragement of the emperor Caracalla (198-211 CE) the Klarian Apollo spread widely in influence and prestige.⁹⁴ In the fourth century the centres underwent revival in the reign of Julian (361-363).⁹⁵

Klaros reached a peak in the mid third century. Its success throughout the first three imperial centuries was, Parke says, attributable to a capacity and willingness to transform itself, “To fit the new spirit of the age.”⁹⁶ I describe this as the assimilative response of the oracle centre to the new religious situation. Didyma, which shared many operational characteristics with Delphi, was a more conservative

the Persians. A foundation myth suggests Branchos was the first speaker of oracles at the site. According to Varro *in Lactantius Plac. Theb.* 8.198, Apollo gave Branchos a staff and crown. The name ‘Didyma’ was used from about 450 BCE. The the staff of Apollo, believed to have been given to Branchos, was a symbol of the prophetic power at Didyma.

⁸⁹ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 112.

⁹⁰ Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 25, 50-51 names Didyma as among eight sites, including Artemis at Ephesos, exempt from an imperial prohibition against receiving monetary gifts.

⁹¹ *DI* 318.

⁹² *DI* 494.2-3.

⁹³ Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 50-51, says these were honorary roles. Neither emperor ever presided over a mantic session.

⁹⁴ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 162.

⁹⁵ Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 25.

⁹⁶ Parke, *Greek Oracles*, 140.

centre than Klaros.⁹⁷ Busine says that Didyma received more private enquiries, while Klaros received more civic delegations.⁹⁸ Both Didyma and Klaros peaked in prophetic activity and visual splendour in the middle of the third century.⁹⁹ Prophetic activity continued at Klaros and Didyma until the end of the third century CE.¹⁰⁰

By around the year 250 CE local oracle centres throughout Asia Minor other than Klaros and Didyma had ceased to function.¹⁰¹

8.5.2 Prophetic processes at Klaros and Didyma

As I have given a brief overview of the sites of Klaros and Didyma, I now turn to the processes involved in consulting a god through an oracle centre, and the prophetic processes that produced an oracular response. The textual evidence, which is mostly inscriptional, and investigation of the architectural structure of the oracular sanctuary itself, give insight into the prophetic processes at oracle centres in the ancient world. Whilst texts are informative, it is the architecture that confirms or refutes the textual evidence on the oracular processes in which a god spoke to human beings through a prophet. Archaeological interpretation of the sites reveals much about what went on in what otherwise might seem to be mysterious religious activities.

Visitors arriving at Klaros and Didyma in the first three imperial centuries encountered busy, highly functional and efficient environments. The business of oracle consultation and delivery of responses was ritualised and ordered. Many personnel were involved

⁹⁷ Parke, *Greek Oracles*, 140; Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 78-9. On the influence of Delphi on Didyma see also Busine, *Paroles d'Apollon*, and C. Morgan, "Divination and Society at Delphi and Didyma," *Hermathena* 147 (1989): 36-9.

⁹⁸ Busine, *Paroles d'Apollon*, 126-7.

⁹⁹ Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 175. By 250 CE almost all the buildings at Didyma were completed on this massive site and all the sub-cults present.

¹⁰⁰ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 98.

¹⁰¹ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 92.

in the business.¹⁰² Consultants could be either individuals, small groups, or envoys from cities. Envoys from cities included bands of musicians, child dancers¹⁰³ and civic representatives. Repeated visitors to oracle centres were known as clients.¹⁰⁴ They could come from any social position. Each visitor was expected to conform to the ritual requirements of oracle consultation. This included the private devotions of individuals and the public offerings of a city.¹⁰⁵

Oracle responses were also subject to financial investment from the consultant, and the type of response received was related to the level of investment and the material means of the consultant. Standardised questions and formulaic responses were frequent,¹⁰⁶ especially for those with limited finances to contribute to the process. Financial investment was traditionally known as the offering of a *πέλανος*, *pelanos*. The background meaning of the *pelanos* is a cake offered to the gods made of meal, oil and honey.¹⁰⁷ In addition, votive sacrifices¹⁰⁸ were expected, animal offerings,¹⁰⁹ communion meal,¹¹⁰ and prayers of the consultant.

¹⁰² See Riel, "Society and Economy," 80-91 on the complex structure of personnel in rural temples in Asia Minor. As previously stated, the bounds of Didyma enclosed an entire village of people who were involved in the staffing of the huge oracle centre. Large oracle centres supported a community of people who lived and worked there, as well as the numerous visitors.

¹⁰³ See oracle from Hierapolis set out below.

¹⁰⁴ Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 233 names the city of Pergamon as the most favoured of Klaros' city clients. Appropriately the city received an elaborate oracular response in the form of an archaic hymn composed in hexameters in recognition of its status. Buresch, (1889) 70; *IGRR* 4.360.

¹⁰⁵ Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 63.

¹⁰⁶ Busine, *Paroles d'Apollon*, 89-93.

¹⁰⁷ *LSJ*, *sf.*, a mixture offered to the gods.

¹⁰⁸ The *φιάλη*, *fiālē*, a broad, flat vessel used to boil liquids, and to offer libations, also used as a cinerary urn, was a common votive offering to Apollo.

¹⁰⁹ Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 63-4. Sheep, goats, bovine cattle (not horses).

¹¹⁰ Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 63, refers the reader to *Iliad* 1.447-474 – a lengthy sacrificial meal of carefully prepared meat, wine and scattered barley, with prayers to Phoibos Apollo in the proximity of his altar, as the kind of communion meal expected as a sacrificial offering by consultants in the oracle centres of Asia Minor.

An oracle of Apollo from Hierapolis provides information on the process of consulting the oracle at Klaros.¹¹¹ The context was a serious plague which affected Asia Minor in the 160s CE. The cause of the plague was believed to be the anger of the gods, and appeasement must be made in the form of sacrifices. In addition, statues of Apollo Klarios as archer¹¹² were to be set up at all the city gates.

21 αὐτὰρ ἐπὶν μιλιαμένων ἀπὸ κῆρες ἴκωνται
22 παῖδας παρθενικῆσιν ὁμοῦ Κολοφῶνα νέεσθαι
23 μολποὺς σὺν λουβῆσιν ἐφίεμαι ἠδ' ἑκατόμβαις
24 προφρονέως ἐπεὶ ἦ μάλα πολλάκις ὕμμε σαώσας
25 οὔτινος ἐκ δημοῖο λάχον μενοεικέος αἴσαν.¹¹³

But after having come and having appeased (the gods) from ruin send back to Kolophon girl and boy singers together with drink offerings already having sent hecatombs willingly since it was very often you were saved but nothing was seen of a satisfying meat portion.

In this oracle instruction is given on how to form a delegation to go to Klaros. When the required sacrifice had been made, a delegation comprising of girl and boy musicians, hecatombs (one hundred sacrificial animals), and drink offerings should go to Klaros. From line 25 it seems that a sacrificial meat offering to the god had been lacking from the citizens of Hierapolis. The Apollo who issued this oracle was not from Klaros, but ordered a delegation to go forth from Hierapolis to Klaros.

In 1959 Louis Robert reported on excavations at Klaros.¹¹⁴ The site was found with subterranean (οἶκος καταγείος) as well as above ground

¹¹¹ Merkelbach and Stauber, 11-13, no. 4; West, "Oracles of Apollo Kareios," 184-85.

¹¹² The image of Apollo as archer encompasses the ἀλεξικόκος epithet discussed above, the one who sends and averts.

¹¹³ Merkelbach and Stauber, 11-13, no. 4.21-25; West, "Oracles of Apollo Kareios," 184-85, no. 2b.21-25.

¹¹⁴ Description of Klaros excavations given by Louis Robert in a lecture delivered at the University of Ankara and recorded as "Les fouilles de Claros," *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1957-1959, and in *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi*, 7.1 (1957): 5-8; 7.2 (1957): 12-14. An English version is available in Machteld J. Mellink, "Archaeology in Asia Minor," *AJA* (1959): 66. Also quoted in Flacelière, *Greek Oracles*, 29-30.

structures. The dimensions of the monumental altar give an impression of the size of the temple and the physical impact it would have had on visitors. The altar measured over eighteen metres in length and nine metres in width.¹¹⁵ From the altar and exedra many inscriptions have been found recording the visits of delegations from cities.¹¹⁶ The excavators concluded that the giant steps of the altar were once covered in inscriptions, but these were no longer extant. Colossal cult statues also resided in the temple, including Apollo, Artemis and Leto.

Robert confirms Iamblichos's account, that divination at Klaros was via water from a sacred spring. Water was the medium that provided the mantic inspiration. The prophet drank from the spring after a ritualised descent into an artificially constructed underground chamber, an ἄδυτον, *adyton*, an exclusive innermost sanctuary, presumably where the spring ran. Consultants of the oracle did not descend with the prophet into the *adyton* and so were not witness to the actual prophetic act. Most consultants would stay outside in the *pronaos* of the temple.¹¹⁷ Only a few privileged ones would enter, and these would not descend to the level of the prophet. Textual evidence is elusive regarding oracle ritual because of the level of secrecy in these processes in which only certain temple officials accompanied the prophet.¹¹⁸ Iamblichos is useful, but his words must be measured against the archaeological evidence of the site. Busine's caution about Iamblichos providing a theoretical rather than practical account of the process is to be noted here.¹¹⁹ Iamblichos writes of the prophetic act at Klaros:

¹¹⁵ Mellink, "Archaeology in Asia Minor," 66.

¹¹⁶ Mellink, "Archaeology in Asia Minor," 66, including from Phokaia, Parion, Herakleia, Laodikeia in Phrygia, Akmonia and Kydonia.

¹¹⁷ Busine, "La consultation," 192.

¹¹⁸ As Wolfgang Günther, *Das Orakel von Didyma in hellenistischer Zeit: Eine Interpretation von Stein-Urkunden*, Instanbuler Mitteilungen Vol. 4 (Tübingen: Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, 1971), 119 advises.

¹¹⁹ Busine, "La consultation," 197.

Εἶναι γὰρ πηγὴν ἐν οἴκῳ καταγείῳ καὶ ἀπ’ αὐτῆς πίνειν τὸν προφήτην ἐν τισὶ τακταῖς νυξώ, ἱερουργιῶν πολλῶν γενομένων πρότερον, πίνοντα δὲ χρησιμωδεῖν οὐκέσθ’ ὀρέμενον τοῖς παροῦσι θεωροῖς.¹²⁰

For there is a spring in a subterranean house and the prophet drinks from it during certain prescribed nights, first making many religious observances, and when he drinks he chants oracles, no more being seen by the consultants standing by.

The god used the prophet as an instrument, an ὄργάνος,¹²¹ and he (a male prophet at Klaros),¹²² is entirely subject to the will of the god. The effect of this instrumental usage by the god on the prophet is powerful and overwhelms him. The prophet at Klaros is not himself for some time after the prophesying:

ὥστε καὶ μετὰ τὴν χρησιμωδίαν μόγις ποτὲ ἑαυτὸν λαμβάνει.¹²³
with the result that even after the prophesying for a time he scarcely holds himself together.

The impact on the prophet here affirms the experience of Kasandra artfully described by Aischylos many centuries earlier – total control of the prophet by the god.¹²⁴ I am also reminded of the *mainads* of Dionysos, who were completely consumed by the god and entered a state of μανία, *mania*, losing full control of their minds and bodies.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Iamblichos *On the Mysteries* 3.11.

¹²¹ Iamblichos: πάρεστι δ’ εὐθὺς καὶ χρῆται ὡς ὄργάνῳ τῷ προφήτῃ – *it is immediately present and uses the prophet as an instrument.*

¹²² Tacitus *Annals* 2.54 on the gender of the prophet at Klaros: relegit Asiam adpellitque Colophona ut Clarii Apollonis oraculo uteretur. non femina illic, ut apud Delphos, sed certis e familiis et ferme Mileto accitus sacerdos – *he sent away to Asia and appealed to Kolophon in order to consult the oracle of Apollo of Klaros. There it is not a female, as at Delphi, but a male priest chosen from certain families from Miletos.*

¹²³ Iamblichos *On the Mysteries* 3.11.

¹²⁴ Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 84 qualifies that control of the female prophet by the god at Didyma did not involve, “Frenzy, babbling, and possession of Apollo’s priestess,” describing such an effect as, “no more than fantasies arising from misunderstanding and credulity.”

¹²⁵ Eusebios *Life of Constantine* 2.50 refers to the madness of the prophet: ὑπὸ μανίας ἐλαυνομένη, *she being driven by madness*. Detienne, “Forgetting Delphi,” 154 reports on the cave dwelling Apollo in Magnesia. Apollo’s own *mania* seized these prophets.

The fact that the preparation of the prophet for a mantic session included fasting, three days for the female prophet at Didyma,¹²⁶ a day and night for the male prophet at Klaros,¹²⁷ would have contributed to sensations of lack of control.

At Klaros the oracle functioned at night (έν τισι τακταῖς νυξώ – on certain prescribed nights), and the scene lit by torches and lamps would have created a powerful atmosphere. Robert reports the site of Klaros was well preserved, the subterranean passages intact.¹²⁸ There is access from the *pronaos* to northward and southward running passageways, a gallery, and a single corridor running towards the centre of the temple. The corridor leads to a chamber, through which a waiting room is accessed. It is here Robert says, that the priests, the annually appointed prophet, and the priest of Apollo appointed for life, the θέσπις, *thespiod* – who put the oracles into verse, and one or two γραμματεῖς *grammateis*, secretaries or scribes, waited.

A sacred stone of Apollo, an omphalos of marble stone, was found in this waiting room.¹²⁹ A tunnel from this room led to a vaulted, narrow second room. The entrance to this room is likely to have been curtained off. Only the prophet would pass through this doorway, on through subterranean darkness to the most mysterious chamber, the place of the secret spring-fed well.

Euripides' *Bakchai* resounds throughout with the *mania* of Dionysos' female followers, the *mainads*.

¹²⁶ Iamblichos *On the Mysteries*: ἡ τριῶν ὅλων ἡμερῶν ἀσιτία – *the fast of three whole days*.

¹²⁷ Iamblichos *On the Mysteries* 3.11: καὶ πρὸ τοῦ πίνειν δὲ οὕτως ἀσιτεῖ τὴν ἡμέραν ὅλην καὶ νύκτα, καὶ ἐν ἱεροῖς τισιν ἀβάτοις τῷ πλήθει καθ' ἑαυτὸν ἀνακεχώρηκεν ἀρχόμενος ἐνθουσιᾶν, καὶ διὰ τῆς ἀποστάσεως καὶ ἀπαλλαγῆς τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων ἄχραντον ἑαυτὸν εἰς ὑποδοχὴν τοῦ θεοῦ παρασκευάζει – *even before he drinks he in such way fasts the whole day and night, and in certain sacred untrodden places he withdrew from the crowd by himself beginning the rapture, and through this departure from and getting away from the human matters himself undefiled he prepares for the reception of the god*.

¹²⁸ As discussed by Mellink, "Archaeology in Asia Minor," 66.

¹²⁹ A similar omphalos stone was found at Delphi in an outer room reserved for the priesthood.

The great complex of Didyma was similarly constructed to facilitate the oracle process. Wolfgang Günther in 1971 proposed an interpretation of the architecture of the temple at Didyma.¹³⁰ The oracular process from consultation to delivery may be discerned from his proposal. Günther suggests that following the preliminary sacrifices and prayers to Apollo, consultants would gather in the morning in the *pronaos* of the temple. At Didyma the *pronaos* was an imposing twelve columned structure in front of the great portal of the east chamber. Consultants would gather firstly in a small building known as a χρησμογράφειον, *chresmographeion*, an office.¹³¹ From there they proceeded to the temple entrance, at the appropriate time of the day.¹³² The consultant, prophet and other ministers would then descend the vaulted corridors leading from the *pronaos* into the *adyton*, the innermost sanctuary.¹³³ There was a waiting room opening off the *adyton* where the consultant remained during the process. A statue of Kanachos Apollo¹³⁴ stood just inside the doorway for consultants and staff to see during the process.¹³⁵ When the ceremony concluded, consultants went back up and out of the temple to the *chresmographeion*, where they would await the official report from the god, translated into verse.¹³⁶

As at Klaros, the source of prophetic inspiration at Didyma was water.¹³⁷ The prophet alone would enter the *adyton* and present the questions in sequence to the πρόμαντις, *promantis* (the female prophet at Didyma) who was sitting by the sacred spring.¹³⁸ When the mantic

¹³⁰ Günther, *Das Orakel von Didyma*, 110-23.

¹³¹ Flacelière, *Greek Oracles*, 30.

¹³² Günther, *Das Orakel von Didyma*, 121.

¹³³ Günther, "Das Orakel von Didyma," 121-22 thinks that consultants never proceeded any further into the temple than this point, and it was from here that the prophet would receive the written request from the consultant.

¹³⁴ κανόχος *noisy* – perhaps in relation to the water flow and splash of the sacred spring.

¹³⁵ Fontenrose, *Didyma*, 80-81.

¹³⁶ Flacelière, *Greek Oracles*, 30-31.

¹³⁷ Günther, *Das Orakel von Didyma*, 114.

¹³⁸ Günther, *Das Orakel von Didyma*, 120.

process was completed the prophet then ascended the steps from the *adyton* to the east chamber. Whilst awaiting the arrival of the prophet with hoped for answers, and as the prophet and ministers moved from the sacred spring to the doorway, consultants would sing hymns of praise to Apollo. A late inscription indicates when the hymns were to be raised:

ὅταν μέλλῃ φάτιν ἄξων [ἀμφαίνειν ἀδ]ύτων¹³⁹

whenever the axle (seat of mantis) is about to bring to light a voice of an oracle from the adyton.

Günther suggests that the arrival of the prophet with the word from the *mantis* as he ascended from the mysterious depths of the temple was ‘epiphany-like.’¹⁴⁰

8.6 Theological oracles

Theological oracles were a type of response issued from the major Asian oracle centres. The theological oracles capture the new religious situation and the assimilative responses of the oracle centres to changes in the ways people thought about god and accessed god. I include here a study of the theological oracle of Apollo from Oinoanda. The Oinoanda oracle draws together some of the insights of the preceding chapters, including the new religious situation and developments toward pagan monotheism. The Oinoanda oracle will be referred to in a comparative study with the Kolossian hymn in the next chapter.

The theological oracles issued from oracular sanctuaries in Asia Minor formed a distinct, even if comparatively small genre of oracle in the

¹³⁹ *DI* 217.6-9 (RB1). The axle is referred to in Iamblichos 3.11: εἴτε ἐπὶ ἄξονος καθημένη προλέγει τὸ μέλλον *whether sitting upon an axle she proclaims the things to come...* In Delphi the mantic seat is a bronze tripod: δίφρου χαλκοῦ τρεῖς πόδας ἔχοντας, or a four legged chair dedicated holy to the god: τετράποδος δίφρου ὅς ἐστιν ἱερὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

¹⁴⁰ Günther, *Das Orakel von Didyma*, 122: “gleichsam in einer epiphaniartigen Erscheinung geheimnisvoll aus der Tiefe kommend.”

imperial period.¹⁴¹ Nock first gave the name ‘theological oracles’ to this category.¹⁴² Specifically, theological oracles respond to questions asked of Apollo about the identity, nature and being of god and gods.¹⁴³ These oracles reflect a change in direction in religious thought. They express the curiosity of people. They engage with an inherent human desire to know god. They reflect a new monotheistic attitude in pagan thought without losing the place of the traditional pagan gods in that environment.¹⁴⁴

The oracle centres of Asia Minor attempted to be inclusive and diverse as they adapted to the changing situation. By the end of the second century CE the presence and influence of Christianity, as well as the more established influences of Judaism, produced responses from the oracle centres that, according to Parke, expounded a syncretistic view of cosmic governance.¹⁴⁵ Oracles originating especially from Klaros were attempts to embrace the diversity of the multiple faiths of Asia Minor. A theological oracle preserved by Macrobius attests to the direction of Klaros in responding to the new religious situation.

Macrobius recorded an oracular response of the Klarian Apollo to the question he assumed to be: “Which of the gods is he to be regarded who is called Iao?”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ On the wider corpus of pagan theological oracles see Thomas Lonzo Robinson, “Theological Oracles and the Sanctuaries of Claros and Didyma,” (PhD diss. Harvard University, 1981); Arthur Darby Nock, “Theological Oracles,” in Stewart Zeph (ed.), *Essays on Religion in the Ancient World*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972): 160-168; Louis Robert, “Trois Oracles de la Théosophie et un Prophète d’Apollon,” *CRAIBL* (1968) 112/4: 568-99.

¹⁴² A. D. Nock, “Oracles Théologiques,” *REA* 30 (1928): 280-290.

¹⁴³ Busine, *Paroles d’Apollon*, 7 treats the theological oracles methodologically the same as the other oracles. This would appear to overlook the distinct differences the theological oracles represent of religious and wider cultural change in the environment.

¹⁴⁴ Belayche, “*Deus deum*,” 165, says theological oracles represent a dynamic between the inexpressible and transcendent god which was understood through speculation, and the many gods who were acclaimed in traditional pagan religion.

¹⁴⁵ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 163. I note my earlier discussion on the use of syncretism and its negative impact (Chapter Seven, section 7.7.1).

¹⁴⁶ Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1.18.19-21.

εἰς Ζεὺς εἰς Ἄϊδης εἰς Ἥλιος εἰς Διόνυσος
one Zeus one Hades one Helios one Dionysos

Macrobius commentates:

Huis versus auctoritas fundatur oraculo Apollinis Clarii, in quo aliud quoque nomen Soli adicitur, quo in isdem sacris versibus inter cetera vocatur Ιαω. nam consultus Apollo Clarius quis deorum habendus sit qui vocatur Ιαω, ita effatus est:

These verses were founded on the authority of the oracle of Apollo Clarius, in whom the other name Sol has been also directed, who in these sacred verses among the rest is called Iao. For when Apollo Clarius was consulted about which of the gods is he who is called Iao, he announced thus:

1 ὄργια μὲν δεδαῶτας ἐχρῆν νηπευθέα κεύθειν·
2 εἰ δ' ἄρα τοι παύρη σύνεσις καὶ νοῦς ἀλαπαδνός,
3 φράζεο τὸν πάντων ὑπατον θεὸν ἔμμεν Ιαω,
4 χεῖματι μὲν τ' Ἄϊδην, Δία δ' εἶαρος ἀρχομένοιο,
5 Ἥελιον δὲ θέρευς, μετοπώρου δ' ἀβρὸν Ἰάκχον.¹⁴⁷

1 *the sacred rites which have been given as oracular response to be hidden are unsearchable;*
2 *but if then surely one has a small intelligence and feeble mind,*
3 *point out that Iao is fixed as god at the top of all gods,*
4 *in winter he is Hades, Zeus at the beginning of spring,*
5 *and Helios in summer, and in late autumn delicate Iakchos.*¹⁴⁸

Macrobius names the Roman theologian Cornelius Labeo as his source.¹⁴⁹ Cornelius Labeo titled this as an oracle of Apollo of Klaros. Macrobius wrote the *Saturnalia* in the fifth century CE. Macrobius assumed that a question asked of the oracular Apollo by an unknown consultant about the identity of Iao referred to Yahweh, or Jehovah. The response honours the Judaic monotheistic theology – “Iao is god at the top of all gods.” It also honours the traditional pagan assignation of gods to the seasons – “In winter he is Hades, Zeus at the beginning of

¹⁴⁷ Merkelbach and Stauber, 45 no. 28

¹⁴⁸ *LSJ*, Ἰακχος is the mystic name of Bakchos.

¹⁴⁹ c.300 CE.

the spring, and Helios in summer, and in late autumn delicate Iakchos.” Macrobius understood that Iakchos and Sol (Ἡέλιος)¹⁵⁰ were names referring to Ιάω.¹⁵¹ Merkelbach and Stauber cite the oracle as an example of henotheism.¹⁵²

Therefore, Iao is a god of the seasons who takes on the names (and presumably the functions) of the other gods named: Hades, Zeus, Helios, Bakchos/Dionysos.¹⁵³ The name Helios is likely to encompass Apollo, who was identified with that epithet in the third century CE. Iao as Bakchos/Dionysos is connected through an early Asian Greek understanding that the god who inhabited the temple at Jerusalem was Bakchos. A golden vine was imagined within the Holy of Holies.¹⁵⁴ Parke writes: “Hence Jehovah could well acquire the epithet appropriate to the Hellenistic concept of the god of wine, and autumn might seem his proper season.”¹⁵⁵

This theological oracle represents the effect of the cultural environment of Asia Minor which was changing in response to a new religious situation. Its content suggests that the processes of acculturation and integration happening in the boundary areas between cultural groups were receptive to sharing religious ideas and language for god. Parke suggests that Zeus represents the old Greek religion, Hades stands for Osiris and the cult of the Egyptian gods present in Asia, Helios/Sol for Persia and Zoroastrianism, and Iao for the Hebrew faith.¹⁵⁶ This oracle represents an attempt to provide a universalising theology, to draw together the new and old ideas about

¹⁵⁰ Epic for Ἡέλιος.

¹⁵¹ Merkelbach and Stauber, 45

¹⁵² Merkelbach and Stauber, 45.

¹⁵³ Bakchos is another name for Dionysos (from the Latin Bacchus).

¹⁵⁴ Josephus *Bellum Iudaicum* 5.210 describes the innermost part of the temple at Jerusalem: ἁγίου δὲ ἁγίον ἐκαλεῖτο – *it was called the holy of holies*. Cf., *Antiquities* 15.395. In Graeco-Roman myth Dionysos was intimately connected with wine.

¹⁵⁵ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 164.

¹⁵⁶ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 164.

god, monotheistic and polytheistic. All expressions of god were voiced through the oracle at Klaros.

8.7 An oracle of Apollo at Oinoanda

In the late second century CE, a mason carved an oracle response into a disused section of a wall high above the city of Oinoanda in northern Lykia.¹⁵⁷ This oracle response has been subject to much enquiry into pagan religious activities, including the monotheistic attitudes and practices which are identified in parts of Asia Minor in the first to the third centuries. The text provides evidence of the ritual behaviour of followers of Theos Hypsistos. The content of this text places it among the small genre of genuine pagan theological oracles.

Le Bas and Waddington first catalogued the text in the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁸ Their rendition of the text was difficult to interpret and it was subsequently published in 1971 by George Bean.¹⁵⁹ Louis Robert then provided a substantial interpretation of the text which was thought provoking and led to responses and further investigations.¹⁶⁰ Robert considered the theological implications of the oracle and made suggestions as to its use. Later reinterpretations developed from these

¹⁵⁷ *SEG* 27 (1977) 933.

¹⁵⁸ Philippe Le Bas and William Henry Waddington, *Inscriptions Grecques et Latines: recueillies en Asie Mineure*, vol. 1 (Meisenheim: Anton Hain, 1870; reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1972), no. 1234. These thought the inscription was a metrical funerary text. Le Bas wrote in Le Bas and Waddington, *Textes de son Voyage Archéologique*, in the volume *d'Explication*, note 1284: "Inscription funéraire métrique, trop mutilée pour pouvoir être restaurée." Bean clarified this mistake.

¹⁵⁹ G. E. Bean, "Journeys in Northern Lycia 1965-67," *Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historisch Klasse, Denkschriften*, 104. (Band. Wien 1971): 20-22.

¹⁶⁰ Louis Robert, "Un Oracle Gravé à Oinoanda," *CRAIBL* (1971): 597-619. I am indebted to Dawn Colsey for working patiently with translating this article while I took notes. Other early modern interpretations were made by M. Guarducci, "Qui e Dio?" *Rendiconti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, serie VIII, vol. XXVII (1972): 335-47; A. S. Hall, "The Klarian Oracle at Oenoanda," *ZPE* 32 (1978): 263-67.

initial attempts.¹⁶¹ Robert also made connections between the oracle in its form at Oinoanda and two other attestations in which the words of the first part of the oracle were reproduced in almost the same form. These two sources are found in the fourth century CE Christian writer Lactantius' *Divine Institutions*¹⁶² and in the later fifth century CE collection of oracles, the *Theosophy of Tübingen*.¹⁶³

The physical location of the oracle is significant to the cult of Theos Hypsistos. The inscription is situated four metres above ground level on the east facing part of a Hellenistic defensive city wall next to a doorway to a round tower on a carved relief altar on a block of the wall with moulded top and bottom.¹⁶⁴ The inscription covers the altar and the text continues onto the block below. It is dated to around 200 CE.¹⁶⁵ At the time the oracle was inscribed that part of the wall was in disuse, beyond the city limits.

¹⁶¹ Hall, "Klarian Oracle," 264 notes that neither Robert nor Guarducci properly understood the significance of the physical location of the oracle and its relationship to the rising sun. This he says, was due to the interpretation of Bean's report which did not allude to the position of the oracle nor to the fact that the inscription was cut into the stone blocks itself, not positioned there afterwards. Robert's attempt to harmonise different versions of the oracle has also been criticised.

¹⁶² Lactantius *Divine Institutions* 1.7.

¹⁶³ Hartmut Erbse, *Fragmente griechischer Theosophien*, Hamburger Arbeiten zur Altertums Wissenschaft, Band 4 (Hamburg: Hanischer Verlag, 1941) and revised again, H. Erbse, *Theosophorum Graecorum Fragmenta. Iterum recensuit H. E.*, (Teubner: 1995).

¹⁶⁴ Bean, "Journeys in Northern Lycia," 20.

¹⁶⁵ The date 200 CE appears to be reasonable and in keeping with the careful studies of several scholars. Guarducci, "Qui e Dio?" 346 says the inscription cannot be later than the middle of the second century CE. Robert, "Un Oracle," 602 says the inscription could not predate the second century CE, and at 610, that it was likely dated to the end of the second and beginning of the third century CE. Hall, "Klarian Oracle," 267 prefers a later date of the second half of the third century CE. Hall's dating is on the outer extreme of probability. Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 20 accepts a date towards the end of the second or the beginning of the third century CE. I am happy to agree with Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 176, and Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 167, and date the oracle to 200 CE.



Figure 15: The theological oracle of Apollo at Oinoanda, in Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 43.

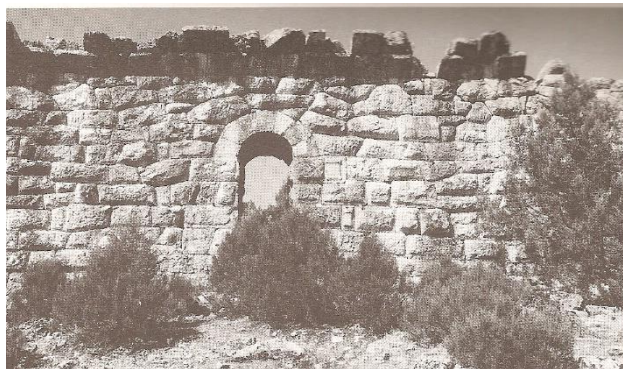


Figure 16: The open-air site of Theos Hypsistos at Oinoanda on the inner side of the Hellenistic city wall, in Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 89. The theological oracle can be seen to the right of the archway. Beneath is another inscription to Theos Hypsistos.

The text of the theological oracle as it appears on the stone is as follows:

[α]ὐτοφυής, ἀδί-	<i>self-generate, without</i>
δακτος, ἀμήτωρ,	<i>teacher, without mother,</i>
ἀστυφέλικτος,	<i>unshaken,</i>
οὔνομα μὴ χω-	<i>not made room for in a</i>
	<i>name,</i>
ρῶν, πολυώνυμος,	<i>many named,</i>
ἐν πυρὶ ναίων,	<i>dwelling in fire,</i>
τοῦτο θεός· μεικρὰ	<i>this is god;</i>
δὲ θεοῦ μερὶς ἄνγε-	<i>we angeloī are a small</i>
	<i>portion</i>
λοι ἡμεῖς. τοῦτο πευ-	<i>of god.</i>
θομένοισι θεοῦ πέ-	<i>To the ones enquiring</i>
	<i>this about</i>
ρι ὅστις ὑπάρχει,	<i>god, whatever her being is,</i>
Αἰ[θ]έρ[ρ]α πανδερκ[ῆ]	<i>he describes Aither as an</i>
	<i>all-seeing</i>
θε]ὸν ἐννέπεν, εἰς	<i>god, into</i>
ὄν ὀρῶντας εὔχεσθ' ἠώ-	<i>whom when looking pray at</i>
ους πρὸς ἀντολίην ἐσορῶ[ν]-	<i>the break of day when</i>
τα[ς] ¹⁶⁶	<i>looking toward sunrise.</i>

The oracle is composed in six hexameters. This construction was common for oracular responses.¹⁶⁷ The Delphic responses were in hexameters. The hexametrical six-line version (not as it appears on the stone, where line breaks occurred to fit the size of the stone, but as it metrically scans) is as below. Each numbered line represents a hexameter.

¹⁶⁶ Text from Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 86; *SEG* 27 (1977) 933.

¹⁶⁷ M. L. West, *Introduction to Greek Metre*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 19: "This (the dactylic hexameter) is the metre of Homer and Hesiod and of all later epic and most didactic poetry. It was also used for poems of various other kinds, including short things such as oracles and riddles; and until about 550BC it was the usual metre for verse inscriptions."

1 [A]ὐτοφυής, ἀδί | δακτος, ἀμήτωρ, | ἀστυφέλικτος, |
 2 οὔνομα μὴ χω | ρῶν, πολυώνυμος, | ἐν πυρὶ ναίων, |
 3 τοῦτο θεός· μεικρὰ | δὲ θεοῦ μερὶς ἄνγε | | λοι ἡμεῖς.
 4 τοῦτο πευ | θομένοισι θεοῦ πέ | ρι ὅστις ὑπάρχει, |
 5 Αἰ[θ]έ[ρ]α πανδερκ[ῆ] | θε]ὸν ἔννεπεν, εἰς | ὄν ὀρῶντας
 6 εὔχεσθ' ἠώ | ους πρὸς ἀντολίην ἔσορῶ[ν] | τα[ς]¹⁶⁸

The scansion of the first line of the oracle, confirming its hexametrical construction is:

1 2 3 4 5 6
 - ∪ ∪ - ∪ ∪ - ∪ ∪ - ∪ ∪ - ∪ ∪ - ∪ ∪ - x ||

αὐτοφυής, ἀδίδακτος, ἀμήτωρ, ἀστυφέλικτος

The first three hexameters provide descriptors of god by means of a negative theology. That is, they define god by saying what god is not.¹⁶⁹

The first three treat a theological subject; they are a response to a question concerning the nature of god. They function as a unity.¹⁷⁰

Given the hexametrical construction of this text, typical of oracles in Asia Minor, the speaker is likely to be Apollo, the prophesying god. The first two hexameters of the response beginning with the descriptors, αὐτοφυής, ἀδίδακτος, ἀμήτωρ, ἀστυφέλικτος, οὔνομα μὴ χωρῶν, πολυώνυμος, ἐν πυρὶ ναίων function as an answer to a question. In the third hexameter, the τοῦτο θεός, this is god, indicates what was the question asked of Apollo: Who is god? God is self-generate, without teacher, without mother, unshaken, uncontained in a name, many named – this is god.

¹⁶⁸ Text set out in hexameter verses in Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 86 and Hall, “Klarian Oracle,” 263; Robert, “Un Oracle,” 602.

¹⁶⁹ Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 170.

¹⁷⁰ Lene Anderson, “An Oracular Creed,” in Bettina Amden and Jorgen Mejer (eds.), *Noctes Atticae: 34 Articles on Graeco-Roman Antiquity and its Nachleben*, (Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002), 17.

The second three hexameters are written in the grammatical third person.¹⁷¹ The second three verses prescribe cultic ritual. They say what to do with the answer given in the first three verses.

I think these six verses are original to the oracle as it was delivered. The verses fit together well. The verse construction is smooth, and the subject of cult ritual neatly responds to the divine answer about god's nature. Parke thinks otherwise. He suggests that the first three and second three verses were not meant to go together, that they represent a theological inconsistency.¹⁷² The importance of ritual in pagan religion, as expressed by scholars such as Belayche and North,¹⁷³ suggest it is quite consistent that cultic instruction follows the theological statement.

In terms of the cultic ritual prescribed in the oracle (εἰς ὃν ὀρῶντας εὔχεσθ' ἠώους πρὸς ἀντολίην ἔσορῶντας), the situation of the inscribed stone affirms the instruction on the way worship was to happen. Hall observed that the southern part of the inner wall in which the oracle was inscribed felt the first rays of sun at daybreak over the mountains ringing the valley in which the city lay, while the northern part of Oinoanda remained in shadow.¹⁷⁴ If worshippers followed the instruction of the oracle, they faced the rising sun to pray to the god identified as celestial all-seeing Aither.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 163.

¹⁷² Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 167. This is also the position of Anderson, "Oracular Creed," 18, who calls the second set of three hexameters prescribing cultic ritual as of "clumsy character," more fitting a charter for a local cult. If this is the case, the verses would be for a cult of Theos Hypsistos in Oinoanda.

¹⁷³ Belayche, "*Deus deum...*," and North, "Pagan ritual and monotheism," are examples of two recent scholars who emphasise the importance of ritual in pagan religion.

¹⁷⁴ Hall, "Klarian Oracle," 265.

¹⁷⁵ Aristotle added ether as a fifth element to Plato's fourth element, fire. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 170. With Stoic influence ether and fire became a familiar 'ethereal fire,' a divine figure who featured among the Olympian gods. Cicero *De Naturam Deorum* 1.39; Porphyry Ἐκ τῆς θεοσοφίας – πῦρ αἰθερίας, *ethereal fire*.

Another inscription from Phrygia, although not theological in content, prescribes worship aligned to the sun's rays.¹⁷⁶ This oracle containing a more common request to the god comes from the centre at Klaros.¹⁷⁷ The response was given to a family who asked Apollo-Helios to secure prosperity for their crops. In addition to the erection of a sunward facing altar, the six-hexameter oracle required monthly offerings to the god to ensure his favour.¹⁷⁸

Hall has identified the πολυσκόπου ἡελίοιο, the much-seeing Helios of this dedication, with the αἰθέρα πανδερκῆ, the all-seeing Aither, of the Oinoanda oracle, suggesting that Theos Hypsistos, the highest god, is intended as the object of ritual devotion.¹⁷⁹ Cline also looks for connections between Aither and Helios to clarify his position on what he believes is a henotheistic theology emanating from the oracle centre at Klaros in the second and third centuries.¹⁸⁰

Affirming that the site of the Oinoanda oracle was a cult place for Theos Hypsistos, and which supports both Hall's and Cline's position, a second inscription exists two blocks down from the oracle: [pic opposite]

¹⁷⁶ Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 166-68 on the common practice of facing the sun for prayer and the understanding that facing the sun gave alignment to the position of god.

¹⁷⁷ Remembering that theological oracles were a small genre within a much larger corpus of oracles reflecting ordinary daily life.

¹⁷⁸ Merkelbach and Stauber, 33 no. 19: Σύμμαχος Ἀντύλ[λου] | κὲ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ Ἄντ[υλ-] | λος κὲ Ἀλέξανδρος [κὲ] | Σύμμαχος κατὰ χρ[ησ-] | Κλαρίω | μόν* Ἀπόλλωνι ἄν[έσ-] | τισαν. χρ[ησ]μό[ς] | εἴσατέ μοι βωμόν π[αν]θηέα τῆδ' ἐνὶ χώρῃ. | [εἰ]ς αὐγὰς ἀθρέοντα πολυσκόπου ἡελίοιο, | εὐαγίας δ' ἐπὶ τοῦδε τε[λ]είετε μηνὸς ἑκάστο[υ.] | ὄφρα κεν ἀλκίτωρ τε[λ]έθων τὰ συνώρια τεύχω. |[τῶν] καρπῶν γὰρ ἐγὼ πέλομ[αι μ]ερόπεσσι παρέκτω[ρ] | [οὓς] ἐθέλω σῶσαι τε κὲ [οἷς] κλέος οἶδα φορέσκειν – *Symmachos son of Antylos and his sons Antylos and Alexandros and Symmachos set (this) up to Apollo Klarios according to an oracle. An oracle. Set up for me a bomos visible to all in this space here, when observing the rays of the much-seeing sun, complete this in full view each month. In order that as protector I may make ready the agreeing of it coming to being. For I hold fast the fruits which I wish to save and also those which the report I know to carry. [*] The asterisk here indicates that in the setting out of the oracle on the stone the -μόν ending of the word oracle, χρ[ησ]μόν, is placed in the line space underneath the name Κλαρίω.*

¹⁷⁹ Hall, "Klarian Oracle," 267.

¹⁸⁰ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 37.

Χρωμα-
τις θεῶ
ὑψίστω
τὸν λύ-
χνον
εὐχ[ή]ν¹⁸¹

Chromatis
to Theos
Hypsistos
a lamp
prayer.



Figure 17: Chromatis dedicates a lamp to Theos Hypsistos, in Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 44.

This second inscription is cut as an altar in relief, smaller than the higher positioned oracle text, appearing as a narrow pillar. Provision for a lamp was made on a small ledge under the carved altar. Another ledge is cut along the top edge of the adjacent block where several lamps could be placed. It was a simple offering by one woman, which Mitchell says was the “humble earthly counterpart to the deity’s divine

¹⁸¹ *CIG* 4380n²; Hall, “Klarian Oracle,” 265.

fire”¹⁸² – ἐν πυρὶ ναίων. The name Chromatis was known as a slave name, or the name of a child of a slave.¹⁸³ This supports Mitchell’s assertion around the mixed status, including lower status inclusion, of followers of Theos Hypsistos.¹⁸⁴ The significance of this inscription, in proximity to the theological oracle, should not be underestimated.¹⁸⁵ The Chromatis inscription provides a context for ritual. It grounds the oracle in the physical place of cult, giving valuable insight into the religious activities of people who worshipped a highest god. It sets up the theory that the oracle is monotheistic in ritual context as well as theology.

Further confirmation of this as a cultic place of Theos Hypsistos was provided by a 2008 investigation of the site which identified more ledges for oil lamps and several inscriptions, mostly weathered, on the south side of the polygonal defensive tower.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 91.

¹⁸³ Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 169. Hall, “Klarian Oracle,” 266 note 17 says Chromatis was the name of a freedwoman.

¹⁸⁴ Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 105.

¹⁸⁵ A cursory remark acknowledging this text by D. S. Potter, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire: A Historical Commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle*, Appendix: “An Oracle Inscribed at Oenoanda,” (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 351: “aside from one very short dedication inscribed a few yards away, it (the text of the oracle) is the only text deliberately cut into the city’s surviving defences,” places no emphasis on the importance of the Theos Hypsistos inscription as supporting a wider cultic context for the reception of the oracle. Neither does the comment indicate any acknowledgement of the geographical location as being significant as a place for Theos Hypsistos worship.

¹⁸⁶ Oinoanda Report 2008, *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut*: <http://www.dainst.org/en/content/oinoanda-report-2008?ft=all> date of access 15 January 2013. This site is no longer accessible.



Figure 18: Corner part of the polygonal tower with newly discovered inscriptions to Theos Hypsistos and recesses for oil lamps. From “The Oinoanda Report 2008,” *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut*, Fig. 8.

The report describes one inscription as a dedication to Theos Hypsistos, but does not give the text. Unfortunately, the report provides no further details. The oracle text is on the other side of the wall, placing it in proximity to any cult activities.

Mitchell has suggested that the semicircular area in front of the oracle inscription, was an open-air sanctuary of Theos Hypsistos, where worshippers gathered at daybreak.¹⁸⁷ Given evidence of the simplicity of dedications of Theos Hypsistos throughout Asia Minor, it is unlikely that cults would have had large gatherings. Therefore, the site could be a space for worship at dawn. The provision for the placing of lamps

¹⁸⁷ Mitchell, “The Cult of Theos Hypsistos,” 90, 98. Mitchell says there is an open level space with a radius of around 25 metres in front of the tower door where the oracle is located. He calls it “a small, open-air ‘theatre,’ where a group of worshippers could gather.”

as noted suggests that lamps and accompanying prayers were used at or near daybreak in ritual response to the supreme god as described in the oracle text. Lane Fox thinks lamps were tended throughout the night as part of cult worship of Theos Hypsistos at the site.¹⁸⁸ I am unconvinced that lamps were used and tended throughout darkness due to the steep physical location of the cult site and narrowness of access, which would make night time excursions risky. Cline also thinks access to the site on top of a steep ridge limited the number of worshippers who could gather at a time. Cline thinks it is impossible to prove that the space was in fact a sanctuary.¹⁸⁹

It is uncertain whether a private individual or the city of Oinoanda asked the question of the oracle of Apollo. Robert suggests that a citizen of Oinoanda asked on behalf of the city the question to the oracle, ‘Who is god?’ and that the response was appreciated sufficiently by the city that an altar was commissioned in honour.¹⁹⁰ He says this because of the connection of the oracle with the longer Christian texts containing the six oracle verses found at Oinoanda.¹⁹¹ In the text from the *Tübingen Theosophy*, a certain Theophilos as θεοπρόπος, which is a public messenger, was sent to enquire of the oracle. Robert says this indicates that the city of Oinoanda sent Theophilos to Klaros for an official consultation.¹⁹² Guarducci disagrees with Robert and says that the oracle was sought privately and that the cult of Theos Hypsistos was not an official city cult.¹⁹³ Hall thinks similarly, noting that the Chromatis dedication was clearly of a private nature.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁸ Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 170.

¹⁸⁹ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 26.

¹⁹⁰ Robert, “Un Oracle,” 603.

¹⁹¹ To be discussed below.

¹⁹² Robert, “Un Oracle,” 610.

¹⁹³ Anderson, “Oracular Creed,” 15 referring to Guarducci’s interpretation of the same Theophilos of Oinoanda from the *Tübingen Theosophy*.

¹⁹⁴ Hall, “Klarian Oracle,” 267. The carving of the Chromatis dedication was much cruder than the theological text.

If the city had sought the oracle and inscribed the response as an official commission, it would seem unusual that it was placed beyond the current city limits. Other oracles emanating from the esteemed centre of Klaros were placed in the city's agora, not on a disused part of the city wall.¹⁹⁵ Only if the significance of the place of the cult of Theos Hypsistos in Oinoanda were such that the priority of its position catching the first rays of sun was greater than the value of occupying a more public place would it likely be an officially sought response.

In support of Robert, the clarity and theological insight of the oracle response is probably greater than that warranted by the enquiry of a single person, or small group. There was a financial cost to consult an oracle,¹⁹⁶ and this was clearly no generic response, even if its content was replicated elsewhere.

8.7.1 Sources of the Oinoanda oracle

The Oinoanda oracle is found quoted in at least two other sources. Both Lactantius' *Divine Institutions* (early fourth century CE) and the *Tübingen Theosophy* (early sixth century CE), are significantly later than the dating of the Oinoanda oracle (200 CE).¹⁹⁷ The chronological precedence of the Oinoanda oracle indicates that the oracle either was given first to Oinoanda and was disseminated from there, or that the same kind of oracular response as given to Oinoanda was given to consultants from elsewhere enquiring about the nature of god.

The oracle text from Oinoanda has produced much interest since the discovery by Louis Robert that the first three lines are found in a similar form in two other places: in Lactantius and the *Tübingen*

¹⁹⁵ Robert, "Un Oracle," 608.

¹⁹⁶ Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 173.

¹⁹⁷ On dating the oracle see note 156.

Theosophy.¹⁹⁸ Both texts are Christian sources. The purpose of the inclusion of the oracle by the authors was to satisfy a Christian end, in which pagan utterances such as this oracle, really were the grappling of pagans toward a Christian truth. In fact, the success of pagan oracles as a means of transmitting messages, theological or otherwise, prompted Christians such as Gregory of Nazianzus (d.390 CE) to formulate their own oracles to further their apologetic purposes.¹⁹⁹ These oracles were intended to mimic the utterances of Apollo. Gregory's words resound with the Oinoanda response. The collection of oracles found in the *Theosophy* includes these oracles along with the genuine pagan theological texts.

Lactantius, a Christian living in Nikomedia in Bithynia and writing in the first decade of the fourth century provides us with the earliest extant commentary on the oracle.²⁰⁰

*Apollo enim, quem praeter caeteros divinum maximeque fatidicum existimant, Colophone residens, quod Delphis (credo) migraverat Asiae ductus amoenitate quaerenti cuidam quis aut quid esse omnino Deus respondit viginti et uno versibus, quorum hoc principium est, αὐτοφυής, ἀδίδακτος, ἀμήτωρ, ἀστυφέλικτος, | οὐνομα μηδὲ λόγῳ χωρούμενος, ἐν πυρὶ ναίων, | τοῦτο θεός· μεικρὰ δὲ θεοῦ μερὶς ἄνγε | λοι ἡμεῖς.*²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Robert, "Un Oracle," 597-609.

¹⁹⁹ Alan Cameron, "Gregory of Nazianzus and Apollo," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 20 issue 1 (1969): 240-41 citing Gregory of Nazianzus *Carmen* ii.2.7.253-5: Φοῖβος μαντεύοιτο θεῶν μόρον οὐκέτ' ἔοντων· | Αὐτοπάτωρ, ἀλόχευτος, ἀμήτωρ ἔστιν ἐκεῖνος, | ὅστις ἐμὸν διέπερσε κακὸν μένος, ὕστατ' αἰείδων... – *Phoibos prophesied his destiny he no longer being of the gods; this one (god) is self-fathering, without spouse, without mother, whosoever mighty has destroyed my evil, later singing...* Certain Benedictine editors suggested that these epithets were suitable for Christ. Cameron thinks otherwise, particularly of the epithet αὐτοπάτωρ, which would seem to deny the doctrine of sonship between Christ and God. Rather αὐτοπάτωρ was applied to a pagan high god in late religious writings. Whilst the oracle is non-genuine (ie., not a pagan oracle originating from an oracle centre), Cameron says it is nonetheless a typical example of a pagan oracle which Christians then used as a powerful weapon against independent pagan speculation on god.

²⁰⁰ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 19 n. 2 reasonably suggests a date of 308CE which is midway between the 305 and 310 which he determines is by scholarly consensus. Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 86 suggests 320, which is somewhat later.

²⁰¹ Lactantius *Divine Institutions* 1.7.1.

Apollo indeed, whom they think divine beyond others and the greatest prophet, responding from Colophon, because he moved away from Delphi (I suppose) being led by the pleasantness of Asia, to someone enquiring who he was, or who god was altogether responded in twenty-one verses, of which this is the principium: self-generate, without teacher, without mother, unshaken, a name not made room for in a word, dwelling in fire, this is god and we angeloι are but a small portion of god.

The verses present here in Lactantius are almost the same as the first three hexameters of the oracle found at Oinoanda. A difference may be seen in the second hexameter with the inclusion of οὔνομα μηδὲ λόγῳ χωρούμενος, *a name not accommodated in a word*. In the Oinoanda version it reads: οὔνομα μὴ χωρῶν, πολυώνυμος, *not accommodated in a name, many named*. This variant in the text is also present in the *Tübingen Theosophy*. The word πολυώνυμος, many named, can be interpreted from a polytheistic perspective.²⁰² As both Lactantius and the sources that were compiled in the *Theosophy* had the Christian motive of trying to show that pagans were really talking about the one god of Judaeo-Christian tradition, the change to οὔνομα μηδὲ λόγῳ χωρούμενος is understandable. Robert thinks that the change from πολυώνυμος, *many named*, occurred when the oracle passed in collection from Porphyry to Christian use.²⁰³ Affirming the Christian context of the versions as they appear in Lactantius and the *Theosophy* is the omission of the second three hexameters of the Oinoanda oracle. As these verses contain cultic instruction on pagan worship, they were unnecessary in a Christian context.²⁰⁴

It may be that both later sources had known the version of the oracle as it reads at Oinoanda and intentionally changed it to suit their purposes, or the sources through which they received the oracle changed it at an earlier date. It is equally possible that more than one

²⁰² Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 86; Parke, *The Oracles of Apollo*, 166. Robert, "Un Oracle," 604-05.

²⁰³ Robert, "Un Oracle," 609.

²⁰⁴ Robert, "Un Oracle," 609.

version of the oracle emanated from the oracle centre of origin. Important words could be changed to suit the context into which they were transmitted.²⁰⁵

It is unlikely that Lactantius travelled to Oinoanda, ascended the steep ridge and viewed the oracle in situ. Robert has said that both Lactantius and the *Theosophy* sourced the oracle through Porphyry.²⁰⁶ Porphyry's work, *On the Philosophy from Oracles*, which is lost to us and known only through the Christian Eusebios, was produced just prior to Lactantius' *Divine Institutions*.²⁰⁷ According to Eusebios, Porphyry had assembled an accurate collection of pagan oracles.²⁰⁸ Neither the *Theosophy* nor Lactantius refer to the inscribed oracle at Oinoanda however. Neither do they indicate any familiarity with Porphyry's work.²⁰⁹ This might indicate the Oinoandans received their oracle from a different source altogether.

Another source of the oracle content is found in the Roman Cornelius Labeo, whose work *De Oraculo Apollonis Clarii* contained a compilation of oracles. Again, this work is lost, but is referred to in the later²¹⁰ *Saturnalia* of Macrobius.²¹¹ There is however, no consensus on whether the oracle was derived from a single or multiple source.²¹²

Lactantius was one author who used theological oracles in his writing. Elsewhere theological oracles were used in hermetic literature, Sibylline oracles and some divine testimonies.²¹³ Pier Franco Beatrice

²⁰⁵ As the traditions of biblical interpretation attest.

²⁰⁶ Robert, "Un Oracle," 609; Gustav Wolff (ed.), *Porphyrii de philosophia ex oraculis haurienda liborum reliquiae*, (Berlin: 1856). (Subsequent edition Gustav Wolff (ed), *Porphyrii de philosophia ex oraculis haurienda liborum reliquiae*, (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1962), 177.

²⁰⁷ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 37.

²⁰⁸ Eusebios *Praep. Ev.* 4.7.

²⁰⁹ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 38.

²¹⁰ Post 400 CE.

²¹¹ Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1.18.19-21. Discussed above.

²¹² Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 40.

²¹³ Stefan Freund, "Christian Use and Valuation of Theological Oracles: The Case of Lactantius' *Divine Institutes*," *Vigilae Christianae* 60 issue 3 (2006): 269-70; Anderson, "Oracular Creed," 19.

thinks Lactantius was the first Christian known to systematically develop theosophical arguments for converting learned pagans.²¹⁴ His purpose was solely apologetic. It was also risky, given the complex content of the oracle which revealed that pagans were indeed thinking seriously and deeply about god. The concern for Lactantius was that he might be perceived as admiring a pagan interpretation of the nature of god.²¹⁵ On five occasions throughout the *Divine Institutions* he quotes oracles of Apollo in hexameters.

The oracle in Lactantius begins with the three verses in question. Lactantius frames the text as a response to a question asked of Apollo about who he was, or who god was altogether: *quis esset, aut quid esset omnino Deus?*

The version of the three hexameters as found in the *Tübingen Theosophy* is the same as Lactantius' except that it comes at the end of an extended response rather than the beginning. The verses follow an introduction in which a certain Theophilus asked Apollo a question about god:

Ὅτι Θεοφίλου τινὸς τοῦνομα τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα ἐρωτήσαντος, σὺ εἶ θεὸς ἢ ἄλλος, ἔχρησεν οὕτως:

A certain person by the name of Theophilus asked Apollo, 'Are you god or another? He thus pronounced an oracle:

Ἔσθ' ὑπὲρ οὐρανόυ κύτεος, καθύπερθε λελογχῶς, φλογμὸς ἀπειρέσιος, κινούμενος, ἄπλετος αἰών· ἔστι δ' ἐνὶ μακάρεσσιν ἀμήχανος, εἰ μὴ ἑαυτὸν βουλάς βουλευήσῃ πατὴρ μέγας, ὡς ἐσιδέσθαι ἔνθαπερ οὐτ' αἰθὴρ φέρει ἀστέρας ἀγλαοφεγγεῖς, οὔτε σεληναίη λιγυφεγγέτις αἰωρεῖται. οὐ θεὸς ἀντιάει κατ' ἀταρπιτόν, οὐδ' ἐγὼ αὐτὸς ἀκτῖσιν συνεὼν ἐπικίδναμαι αἰθεροδινῆς. ἀλλὰ πέλει πυρσοῖο θεοῦ περιμήκετος ἀυλὼν, ἔρπων εἰλίγδην,

²¹⁴ Pier Franco Beatrice, "Pagan Wisdom and Christian Theology According to the *Tübingen Theosophy*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 issue 4 (1995): 407.

²¹⁵ Anderson, "Oracular Creed," 19: "The underlying idea in Lactantius' kind of argument is that the pagans, though fundamentally wrong in their religious conceptions, may nevertheless have some dim ideas of the truth. This position of course makes it possible for Lactantius to argue both with and against the pagan texts."

ροϊζόμενος, οὐ μὲν ἐκείνου ἀψάμενος πυρὸς αἰθερίου δεῖ σειέ τις ἦτορ· οὐ γὰρ ἔχει δαίειν. ἀζηγεῖ δ' ἐν μελεδηθμῶ αἰῶν αἰῶσιν ἐπιμίγνυται ἐκ θεοῦ αὐτοῦ. αὐτοφυής, ἀδίδακτος, ἀμήτωρ, ἀστυφέλικτος, οὐνομα μηδὲ λόγῳ χωρούμενον, ἐν πυρὶ ναίων, τοῦτο θεός· μικρὴ δὲ θεοῦ μερὶς ἄγγελοι ἡμεῖς.²¹⁶

There is above heaven a vessel, by the will of the gods from above, a boundless flame, moving, an immense eternity; and he is irresistible among the blessed ones, unless the great father should plan a purpose himself, so that he might be looked into; there neither the ether bears stars with splendid light, nor the moon raises clear light. No god meets him on the road, neither I myself join him spreading sunrays over the whirling ether. But he moves very high up so he might light up the flutes of god, whirling, rolling, being rushed through the air. Anyone touching that ethereal fire does not shakes the heart; for god does not have to divide. And in unceasing care Aion is mingled with Aions by god himself. Self-generate, without teacher, without mother, unshaken, a name not contained in a word, dwelling in fire, this is god; we angeloι are a small portion of god.

In this sixteen-line oracle god is described as Aion and fire, an entity over the heavens, ὑπερουράνιος, beyond the ether, far beyond and removed from the visible and created realm. Even gods such as Apollo do not go there on their own. The supreme god exists there removed from all others. This is an expression of the platonic cosmology described in the *Timaios*.²¹⁷

Gustav Wolff in 1856 published these sixteen verses as an appendix to his edition of thirteen fragments from different manuscripts of the works of Porphyry on oracles.²¹⁸ In 1889 Karl Buresch published a manuscript found in Tübingen which contained all these texts and more as an addendum to his work on Klaros.²¹⁹ The *Tübingen*

²¹⁶ Wolff, *Porphyrii de philosophia*, 231-234.

²¹⁷ See Chapter Six on the construction of the universe in the *Timaios*, which is a foundational concept and source for philosophical monotheism.

²¹⁸ Wolff, *Porphyrii de philosophia*. The appendix is entitled Ἐκ τῆς θεοσοφίας.

²¹⁹ Karl Buresch, *Klaros. Untersuchungen zum Orakelwesen des späteren Altertums*, (Leipzig: 1889). The addendum appears under the heading Χρησμοὶ τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν θεῶν.

Theosophy, as it is conveniently referred to, is also published by Hartmut Erbse.²²⁰

The purpose of the *Tübingen Theosophy* is likely to be scholarly. As its date is much later than the time Christianity became the mainstream religion in the Mediterranean, there is not the sense of urgency and polemic evident as in Lactantius who wrote before the time Christianity was well established. However, the material contained in the *Theosophy*, may have been collected by Christian sources for apologetic purposes before it was put together in the *Theosophy*. The *Theosophy* (θεοσοφία) was compiled as a four book appendix to a seven book treatise, *On True Belief* (περὶ τῆς ὀρθῆς πίστεως), written around 500 CE.²²¹ The seven books were lost, apparently on account of their Monophysite tenets.²²² The *Theosophy* itself contains various texts, including oracles of Apollo, the Sybilline oracles, Orphic writings, sayings of different philosophers.²²³ The pagan oracles contained in the *Theosophy* were those largely consistent with Christian theology. Any omissions may have been to disguise contents offensive to Christian theology.²²⁴

Robert tried to harmonise the three versions of the oracle,²²⁵ an effort which has not gained scholarly consensus.²²⁶ Harmonising the versions detracts from the diversity of the cultural groups represented in the production and dissemination of the theological oracles. In attempting

²²⁰ Erbse, *Fragmente griechischer Theosophien*, and *Theosophorum Graecorum Fragmenta. Iterum recensuit H. E.*

²²¹ Beatrice, "Pagan Wisdom," 403. A sixteenth century Byzantine manuscript provides information on the contents of the lost books.

²²² Pier Franco Beatrice, "Monophysite Christology in an Oracle of Apollo," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 4 Issue 1 (1997): 13-14.

²²³ Anderson, "Oracular Creed," 19.

²²⁴ Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 168.

²²⁵ Robert, "Un Oracle," 609.

²²⁶ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 40 suggests, along with others (see below), the likelihood of multiple versions of the oracle. Anderson, "Oracular Creed," 11-14 takes the oracle as deriving from three separate sources. Parke, *Oracles of Apollo*, 167 takes both the theological oracle at Oinoanda and the Chromatis dedication in proximity to be incomplete and representative of texts derived from a religious anthology.

to harmonise the versions Robert presumed that Theophilus, a citizen of Oinoanda obtained an oracular response in Klaros on behalf of the city of Oinoanda. Twenty-one verses were given (Lactantius: *respondit viginti et uno versibus*) of which sixteen are known from *Theosophy*. He suggests the first thirteen verses were omitted from the inscription because they were too long for the stone altar.²²⁷

I think that the Oinoanda response was not too long for the stone. This would especially be the case if as Robert says, the oracular consultation was an official city commission. Oinoanda was home to numerous lengthy inscriptions, including the very large and well-known texts of the Epicurean philosopher Diogenes of Oinoanda.²²⁸ Therefore the length of the inscription ought not to have been an issue, particularly of a text seemingly so important in content.

For Robert's hypothesis of a synthesis of all three versions to work, each version would have originated from the same source. There would also have been a lacuna in the *Theosophy* text, which is only sixteen lines long. Lactantius proposes twenty-one lines. There is also the issue of the three hexameters from the Oinoanda oracle appearing as the beginning of Lactantius's version and the conclusion of the *Theosophy* version. Wolff, Buresch and Robert agree that Lactantius' *principium*, which comes at the introduction of the oracle, means 'the main point,' the *summa*, not the beginning of the response. If this was the case it would be possible to synthesise the versions.²²⁹ Potter prefers to account for the line discrepancy between Lactantius and

²²⁷ Robert, "Un Oracle," 609 ff.

²²⁸ c.120 CE. New discoveries of this already large inscription have happened as recently as the 2007 campaign undertaken by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in Oinoanda, www.dainst.org. See "Oinoanda Report 2008," Fig. 6. One of the newly discovered fragments contains a statement of Diogenes' attitude to Plato's theory of cosmogony.

²²⁹ Buresch, *Klaros*, 57 first made this claim in 1889 citing Tertullian *Contra Hermogenes* 19 and Pliny *Natural History* 9.106 to support this. Potter, *Prophecy and History*, 353 says these Latin writers do not support the claim. Robert, "Un Oracle," 609.

Porphyry as the result of multiple utterances of the oracle.²³⁰ Cline affirms the likelihood of multiple oracles or different versions of the oracle.²³¹

In addition to Potter and Cline, Anderson and Merkelbach and Stauber think there were three separate origins for the extant texts in which the oracle verses appear.²³² This would make more sense of the line discrepancy between Lactantius and the *Theosophy* rather than grappling for obscure meanings of words like *principium* to try and justify the harmonisation of texts. If there were separate origins for the texts it would seem likely that there were other occasions when the oracle was used. Anderson goes as far as saying: “the three-line sequence constituted a standard statement, used and re-used widely to convey an accepted religious opinion and functioning as something like a creed in a religious world generally without dogmas.”²³³ Mitchell confirms the use and reuse of oracular material in his discussion of the oracle from Melli which is found in Greek and nine Latin versions.²³⁴ Mitchell suggests this oracle is an exegesis of the oracle text from Oinoanda.²³⁵

The religious instructions contained in oracle responses, whether theological or otherwise, follow a pattern of repetition.²³⁶ Responses were repetitive because Apollo, as the main god consulted at oracle centres, held a unified personality in which prophesying, aversion and protection were aspects which were maintained throughout different cultural contexts.²³⁷ This meant that responses contained similar

²³⁰ Potter, *Prophecy and History*, 351.

²³¹ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 32.

²³² Anderson, “Oracular Creed,” 16; Potter, *Prophecy and History*, 353-54; Merkelbach and Stauber, 44; Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 32.

²³³ Anderson, “Oracular Creed,” 21.

²³⁴ Mitchell, “Melli,” 151-5. See discussion in Chapter Seven and further, in Chapter Nine.

²³⁵ Mitchell, “Melli,” 153.

²³⁶ Anderson, “Oracular Creed,” 17.

²³⁷ Thus Miller, “Origin and Original Nature of Apollo.”

themes designed to provide for protection against danger through prophetic response.

There is evidence of repetition in oracle utterances. Oinomaïos of Gadara, the Cynic philosopher, expressed disappointment at the oracle for providing him with a response that had been delivered to another person.²³⁸ Generic responses were likely to have been more common than the surviving texts indicate. The cost of consultation for ordinary people would have been one of the reasons. The early Hellenistic inscription from Hierapolis discussed above, of a premade response for use by drawing lots is an example of this.²³⁹

8.7.2 Interpreting the oracle in the cultural environment

The Oinoanda oracle in its various forms is an example of the assimilative response of the major oracle centres of Asia Minor to the religious situation that emerged in the cultural environment in the first three centuries. The oracle captures the processes of traditional religion adapting to wider cultural change. The oracle centres held the authority of a traditional religious structure. By assimilating elements of a new religious situation, at least in Asia Minor, the oracle centres

²³⁸ Saul Levin, "The Old Greek Oracles in Decline," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt II: Rise and Decline of the Roman World*, W. Hasse (ed.), Vol. 18/2 (Berlin-New York, 1989), 1633. Eusebios *Praep. Ev.* 5.21.6-23 contains an account of Oinomaïos' discovery that someone from the crowd had overheard the very same response given him in his quest for wisdom from the oracle at Klaros to a merchant from Pontus. The oracle reported that he would receive assistance from the κήπος Ἡρακλήϊος, garden of Herakles, which inspired him to exaltation before realising he had been deceived: (Oinomaïos) οὐκ ἀπηλλαγμένα πικρίας, οὐδὲ γὰρ δαίμονος, μὴ ὅτι θεοῦ, τοὺς παρὰ τοῖς Πανέλλησι θαυματοζομένους χρησμούς εἶναι βούλεται, γοήτων δὲ ἀνδρῶν πλάνας καὶ σοφίσματα ἐπὶ ἀπάτη τῶν πολλῶν ἐσκευωρημένα... εἷς τις ἐκ τῶν πολλῶν λέγει, ἐπομνύμενος αὐτούς τοὺς συναιρομένους θεούς, ἢ μὴν παρὰ σοῦ ἀκηκοέναι αὐτὸ τοῦτο Καλλιστράτῳ δεδομένον Ποντικῶ τιτι ἐμπόρῳ - *I am not set free of bitterness, for it is not from a daimon, not because of god, I am willing to be amazed at the oracles along with all the Greeks, but deceit is upon them all, being beguiled at the errors of human beings and fabricated sly tricks... a certain one of them all said, having sworn himself by bringing together the gods, truly your deceit has been heard the same as this has been given to Kallistratos of Pontus a certain merchant.*

²³⁹ Merkelbach and Stauber, 15, no. 7; Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 236.

grew in prominence as sources of theological insight into the divine. Alongside this, the oracle centres continued to issue responses belonging to mainstream traditional religion. The theological oracles carried the authority of the prophetic tradition of Apollo. They were transmitted across the Roman Empire, to people and places who were asking questions about god.

A question has been asked about who or what god is in each of the oracle versions. Through the prophetic response of Apollo, the *mantis* has described god as independent of any other divine being. This god is ἐν πυρὶ ναίων, dwelling in primal fire. This god cannot be named, οὔνομα μὴ χωρῶν, πολυώνομος, or is unable to be contained in a word, οὔνομα μηδὲ λόγῳ χωρούμενος. This god is described as the supercelestial ether, or the *aion*, a divinity which sees all things, Αἰθέρα πανδερκῆ, even as she is beyond them. An image of the hierarchy of divine and semi-divine beings as described in Plato's *Timaios* is found in the oracle versions. In this universe, the unshakeable, immoveable creating divinity exists separated from the rest of everything. This being exists in perfection, unsullied by anything that has been created. This is the Theos Hypsistos, the one to whom worshippers humbled themselves and lit lamps and said prayers before, even as they looked toward mediators to fulfil a personalised relationship.

In the hierarchy of beings Apollo himself is θεοῦ μερίς, a small portion of god, lower in the scale of beings, yet still possessing divinity as *angelos*. Through Apollo's message worshippers received cultic instruction for honouring the highest god. With flame, they respect her primal position, sunward they seek light and heat, remembering as they do Helios-Apollo who brings them word, who bridges a gulf between realms, ideal and material, that they cannot pass.

This oracle gives evidence of a shift in focus away from the traditional pagan interpretation of the gods. Its theology is not unknown. It has been part of a long line of philosophical enquiry. The new thing is the application of the theology to a ritual context.

8.7.3 Summing up the Oinoanda oracle

The Oinoanda oracle and its versions have been the subject of much scholarly debate since Lactantius first commented on it. In this discussion, I have considered the oracle in the inscription at Oinoanda, in Lactantius and in the *Theosophy of Tübingen* collection. I have studied the cultic context of the Oinoanda inscription with a cult of Theos Hypsistos, and whether the cultic instruction was originally included when the oracle was issued. I have examined the status of the Oinoanda oracle as a theological oracle and assessed its place in the new religious situation.

I conclude that the oracle was a significant document specifying a theological statement about god along with cultic ritual to accompany it. The six hexameters found at Oinoanda were originally given together from a single oracle centre. The likelihood of that centre being Klaros is confirmed by other theological oracles originating from there in a period in which Klaros experienced a height of activity. Klaros and Didyma were pagan focal points of a new religious expression which found cultic output in followers of Theos Hypsistos.

The content of the oracle preserved in Lactantius and the *Theosophy* were not derived from Oinoanda. They are examples of the wide dissemination of theological speculation on the nature of god which were issued from oracle centres. They are examples of the response to questions people, as individuals and communities, were asking about god. This conclusion supports a cultural environment which was moving toward monotheistic understandings of god.

The theological oracle responses were part of the process of answering questions people asked about god: Who is god? What is god's nature? Which god should we worship? Which god is highest? Nothing similarly theological was transmitted from the prominent oracle centre of Delphi.²⁴⁰ This confirms that oracle centres in Asia Minor, particularly the large centres of Klaros and Didyma, contributed to the journey toward pagan monotheism. The oracle centres were places where minority groups and mainstream met in a common assimilative space. In this space language and ideas about god were shared.

8.8 Conclusion: the voice of the oracle

In this study, I affirm the important place of oracles in traditional pagan religion. I acknowledge the long background preserved in ancient literature as well as inscriptional evidence. The embeddedness of pagan religion in all aspects of culture, and the lack of formal doctrine for the most part, contributed to the significance of oracles as the main means of divine communication. Evidence of faith placed in divine communication confirms the oracle centres as places of religious authority.

Apollo was the main god of prophecy. The prophetic role of Apollo was a major part of his appearance in Asia Minor and elsewhere in the ancient world. The many different functions of the god fit his prophetic role. The arrival of pandemic Apollo in cities and villages in Asia Minor reflect the assimilative capacity of the god. The Hellenistic Apollo became the superior identity, appending the names of indigenous prophetic gods, even as the characteristics of indigenous practices were preserved.

²⁴⁰ Anderson, "Oracular Creed," 17.

The major oracle centres of Asia Minor in the imperial period were places of much activity, industry, tourism, tradition, progression in religious ideas. Klaros and Didyma were renowned places, patronised by emperors, cities, and individuals. The prophetic processes were complex. Insights are discerned through the evidence of the responses themselves and the architecture of sites. The types of response from the voice of the oracle depended on the status and means of the consultant. The prophetic industry was integrally linked to the economic success of the centres and their ongoing viability even in an environment of religious change.

Klaros especially showed evidence of assimilation through its capacity to respond to questions about the identity and nature of god. The theological oracles issued from the oracle centres responded to a cultural trend toward monotheism. The theological response received at Oinoanda reflects this wider trend and places it in the cult context of worship of a highest god, Theos Hypsistos. Theological oracles such as the Oinoanda oracle were experiments in synthesising new ideas about a highest god with the role and esteem of the traditional gods. Within this synthesis, Apollo continued to have a role. The ongoing status of Klaros and Didyma reflect the success of these oracle centres throughout the third and into the fourth centuries.

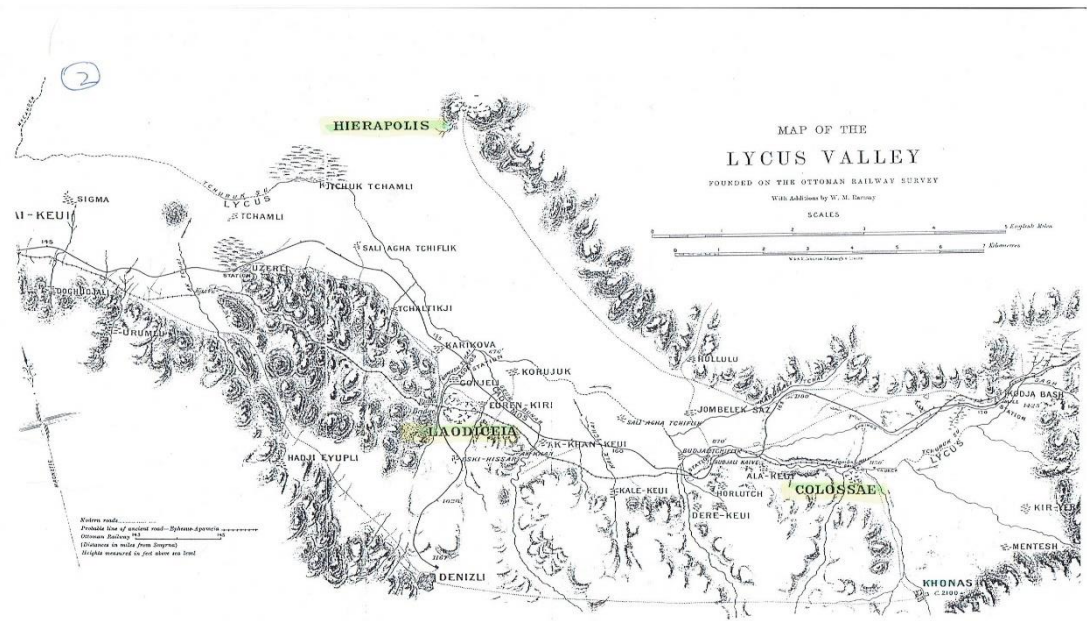
The voice of the oracle was so important both in mainstream and minority pagan groups, that the eventual silencing of the oracles with the dominance of Christianity as a mainstream cultural influence represented a significant point of death in pagan religion.

9. A HYMN FOR KOLOSSAI

In the last chapter, I considered oracles as a means of communication from divine to human. I looked for evidence of the oracle centres being active agents of change in the new religious situation and for pagan monotheism within oracle communication. I discovered oracle communication that gave evidence of pagan monotheism within a cultic context of devotion to Theos Hypsistos, the highest god. I now move the focus from pagan monotheistic practices to Christian expressions of monotheism. I intend to seek connections between pagan and Christian monotheistic practices as evidence of a common background cultural environment.

Now in this chapter I give an overview of Christian community in the Lykos Valley in southwestern Phrygia, with attention to the city of Kolossai. I then turn to the biblical Letter to the Kolossians and identify points of community conflict evident in the letter. I take the hymnic portion of the letter (Kol 1.15-20) and read it alongside monotheistic pagan, traditional pagan and Jewish religious practices. Finally, I place the hymn and the theological oracle from Oinoanda discussed in the previous chapter in cultural and cultic context. I undertake a comparative analysis between the oracle and hymn and assess whether the two texts contain language and vocabulary expressing a highest god which is mutually resonating.

I investigate whether pagan ritual practices which can be associated with monotheism in the cultural environment of the Lykos Valley were influential in the Christian *ekklesia*. Did the religious attitude and cult backgrounds of pagan monotheistic groups find expression in the divergent practices noted in the biblical letter? Was the cultural environment a matrix for the expressions of god evident in oracle and hymn?



Map 3: “Map of the Lycus Valley founded on the Ottoman Railway Survey,” with additions by W. M. Ramsay, in W. M. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire before AD 170*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1902), 472. The map highlights the three main cities of the Valley, Hierapolis, Laodikeia and Kolossai.

9.1 Locating Kolossai in the Lykos Valley

The three main cities of the Lykos Valley in Phrygia: Kolossai, Hierapolis and Laodikeia, were among those places where Christian communities and their worshipping bodies, the ἐκκλησίαι, assemblies, or churches, became established. Ancient Kolossai lies in the valley of the Lykos River, which is a tributary of the larger Maeander River in Phrygia, in the Roman province of Asia, near to the geographical borders of Lydia and Karia. Kolossai lies 4.8 km to the north of the less ancient city of Khonai. Nearby in the valley are two other significant cities, Laodikeia¹ and Hierapolis.² The three formed a triangle of trade,³ social, cultural and political interactions. The territories of

¹ Laodikeia was one of the Jewish assize centres, where money was collected for contribution to the Jerusalem temple.

² At Hierapolis, there was an oracle centre of Apollo. See Chapter Eight section 8.4.

³ Strabo 13.4.14 refers to the mineral streams which assisted in producing dyed purple wool which was an important trade item in the valley.

these cities bordered each other, and their nearness likely led to local conflicts between them.⁴ An important road passed through the valley from Ephesos to Apameia.⁵ It would have been along this road that the emperor Hadrian and his entourage passed in the early second century.⁶ Classical authors report activity at Kolossai indicative of an important city.⁷ By the first century CE its importance appears to have declined.⁸ Early modern commentators agree that the city declined through antiquity.⁹ Laodikeia and Hierapolis were assumed to take a greater role. Kolossai, as the other cities in the Lykos Valley, was

⁴ Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 25, 27. Alan H. Cadwallader, “Inter-City Conflict in the Story of St Michael of Chonai,” in *Religious Conflict in the Early Christian World*, D. Luckensmeyer and W. Mayer, eds. (Tübingen: de Gruyter, 2013), 1 provides a vivid description of intense conflict as it was later recorded in the vernacular story of Saint Michael, especially between Laodikeia and Kolossai.

⁵ See Map 3 above. The probable line of the ancient road between Ephesos and Apameia is indicated by Ramsay by the horizontal line with vertical line spacings.

⁶ In the year 129-31 CE the emperor Hadrian (117-38 CE) visited the cities of the Lykos as part of his second Asian tour. An inscription from this time attests to his public proclamation as Olympian emperor, *IGR IV.869*: ἀὐτοκρά- | τορι Καίσα- | ρι Τραϊανῶ Ἄ- | δριανῶ Σε- | βαστῶ Ὀλυμ- | πῖω Ἄ Μα- | κεδῶν χει- | λίαρχο – *to the emperor Caesar Trajan Hadrian Augustus Olympios Loukios S(tatios) Makedo the military tribune (dedicated this)*. It is likely that the granting of Roman citizenships during and after this tour resulted. Cadwallader, private correspondence 2005. J. C. G. Anderson sketched the inscription in 1897. See Cadwallader, *Fragments of Colossae: Sifting Through the Traces*, (Hindmarsh: ATF Press, 2015), 37. See also Strubbe, *ΑΠΑΙ ΕΠΙΤΥΜΒΙΟΙ*, 194.

⁷ Herodotos 7.30 on Xerxes’ army camping in Kolossai; Xenophon *Anabasis* 1.2.6 described the city as: πόλιν οἰκουμένην, εὐδαίμονα καὶ μεγάλη – *a well populated city, prosperous and great*.

⁸ When Strabo 7.8.13 (d.c.24 CE) wrote, he described Kolossai as a πόλισμα, which is another word for a city or town, or the buildings of a city, but not the more commonly applied word πόλις, which is used of significant cities. *LSJ* say sometimes the meaning is the same as πόλις, other times different. It can also mean ‘community.’

⁹ Such as J. B. Lightfoot, *St Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, (London: MacMillan and Co., 1875), 15-16. Lightfoot, 16 even says that Kolossai “disappears wholly from the pages of history.” Later commentators such as Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 25 continue to suggest that Kolossai declined through the imperial period. Evidence that Kolossai did recover from the earthquake is presented though subsequent epigraphical and numismatic discoveries from the site. Coins were minted from the time of Hadrian, including the important *homonoia* coin issued between Kolossai and Aphrodisias. Such evidence indicates the city remained viable and active for centuries after its supposed decline. On numismatic evidence from Kolossai see H. von Aulock, *Münzen und Städte Phrygiens* (Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, 2 vols., 1980, 1987); B. V. Head, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Phrygia*, (London: British Museum, 1906). On the *homonoia*, see D. J. MacDonald, “The Homonoia of Colossae and Aphrodisias,” in *Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte* 33 (1983): 25-7.

likely to have been affected by earthquake in the mid first century.¹⁰ Little surface archaeology remains of the city of Kolossai. Much remains to be rediscovered and interpreted, and time will reveal more deeply held mysteries.¹¹

9.1.2 Christian community in the Lykos Valley

Christian groups began to emerge in the first century, following the proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth. In the first three centuries CE Christians were minority groups, even as they rapidly expanded over these three centuries.¹² In Asia Minor they began through the evangelistic efforts of the followers of Jesus who moved beyond Palestine and set up communities in various places.¹³ Epigraphic evidence of very early Christian groups is less obvious than evidence for Jewish and pagan groups, at least in the first and second centuries, meaning the literary biblical material is frequently the main source for studies of Christian communities.¹⁴

Christian groups represented those of the new religious type.¹⁵ Membership required an individual choice and commitment to that choice. This meant that Christian groups stood out from mainstream traditional paganism. The existence of a new religious situation in the cultural environment, the rise in prominence of individuals making

¹⁰ Tacitus *Annals* 14.27.1 records the destruction of Laodikeia in 60 CE; Eusebios *Chronicle* 210 places the event in 64 or 65. He writes later than Tacitus, (c. 325 CE) and he includes the destruction of Kolossai and Hierapolis in his report.

¹¹ See the compilation of data in Cadwallader, *Fragments of Colossae*.

¹² Harland, *Associations, Synagogues and Congregations*, 2 names both Christian and Jewish groups as “minority cultural groups.” This status he claims is due to their shared monotheism within a polytheistic culture.

¹³ The Book of Revelation refers to seven major centres were established in Asia Minor (Rev 1.4); Ephesos (2.1), Smyrna, (2.8), Pergamon (2.12), Thyateira (2.18), Sardis (3.1), Philadelphia (3.7), Laodikeia (3.14).

¹⁴ The Book of Revelation, the Acts of the Apostles, The Gospel of John, the letters to the Kolossians, Ephesians, Galatians, Philemon, and John refer to life in the developing Asian *ekklesiai*.

¹⁵ See study in Chapter Five, sections 5.2 and 5.3 on religious change in the cultural environment and religious groups of the new type.

conscious choices about religion, the factors of acculturation and integration, facilitated by good roads, relatively secure frontiers, and trade and commerce interactions, all enabled a diverse mix of people to interact and become part of new groups away from the static traditions of civic religion. In addition, the sound evidence of conflicting issues in the Kolossian letter indicates the *ekklesiai* were made up of a mix of people.¹⁶

As Christianity was a monotheistic religion with continuity through Jewish roots, it is reasonable to assume that Jewish people, or those attracted to Judaism, were drawn to it. Similarly, as the evidence from the letter referring to the pagan religious practices discussed in this chapter suggests, people were likely to come from pagan monotheistic groups into *ekklesiai*.

Christian communities gained members from Judaism and from non-Jewish cultural groups, both mainstream Hellenistic pagans and less Hellenised indigenous pagans. Pagans became members especially if they already shared a monotheistic attitude toward god. The reference at Kol 3.11 to the mix of community supports this:

ὅπου οὐκ ἔνι Ἑλλήνων, καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία,
βάρβαρος, Σκύθης, δούλος, ἐλεύθερος, ἀλλὰ [τὰ] πάντα καὶ ἐν
πάσιν Χριστός
*where there is no Greek, and Jew, circumcision and
uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is
everything and in everything.*

Groups described in this verse as barbarian and Scythian I consider have pagan non-Greek backgrounds. The term 'barbarian' was very loosely applied, usually with a perjuring sense, in the ancient world. Ancient writers describe οἱ βάρβαροι as opposed to οἱ Ἕλληνες, with the superiority resting with the Greeks.¹⁷ 'Barbarian' and 'Scythian,'

¹⁶ Gal 3.28 and Kol 3.11 reflect this diversity.

¹⁷ Plato *Politics* 262D; Thucydides 1.3; Strabo 661.

were type words to describe those who were not Greek, and who did not share Greek as a first language.¹⁸

Even the distinction made between circumcision and uncircumcision here, the περιτομή καὶ ἀκροβυστία, may mean that full Jews in addition to those who stood at the outer edge, such as the *theosebeis*, were members of the Kolossian Christian community. Indications of Jewish influence in the community at Kolossai are found in the letter at 2.16,¹⁹ 21; 4.11.²⁰ Indigenous pagan groups may lie behind the practices referred to at 2.18, 23. These will be discussed more fully below.

The diversity of issues represented in the biblical witness of the developing Asian *ekklesiai*, which were distinct to each community suggest that different types of Christian practices existed within the Lykos Valley.²¹ Trebilco thinks that whilst these did not come together in worshipping *ekklesiai*, that there nonetheless was a network of Christian communities in close communication.²² The writer of the Kolossian letter admits his struggle, ἀγῶνα, for those in Laodikeia as

¹⁸ *LSJ* describe βάρβαρος as one who was foreign, who did not share the Greek language.

¹⁹ Arnold, “Sceva, Solomon, and Shamanism,” 8, agrees with the Jewish influence in this verse.

²⁰ Kol 4.10-11 refers directly to Jewish influence: Ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Ἀρίσταρχος ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου καὶ Μᾶρκος ὁ ἀνεπιὸς Βαρναβᾶ (περὶ οὗ ἐλάβετε ἐντολάς, ἐὰν ἔλθῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς, δεῦρασθε αὐτόν) καὶ Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Ἰουῆτος, οἱ ὄντες ἐκ περιτομῆς, οὗτοι μόνοι συνεργοὶ εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, οἵτινες ἐγενήθησάν μοι παρηγορία –

Aristarchos my fellow prisoner of war greets you and Markos the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you received instructions, if he comes to you,) and Jesus known as Justus, these ones are from the circumcision, these only are my fellow workers in the kingdom of god, they have been a comfort to me. This is a specific reference to Jewish people, although not in Kolossai, but as colleagues of the letter writer. It does infer however, that Jews were in the community at Kolossai because the writer conveys their greetings to the *ekklesia*, perhaps to encourage the Jewish converts there.

²¹ Paul Trebilco, “Christians in the Lycus Valley: the view from Ephesus and from Western Asia Minor,” in Alan H. Cadwallader and Michael Trainor (eds.), *Colossae in Space and Time: Linking to an Ancient City*, (Göttingen/Oakville: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 193 suggest that Pauline, Johannine and Nicolaitan types of Christianity were present. Pauline Christianity was introduced first, possibly in the 50s, then Johannine in the 70s and Nicolaitan thereafter.

²² Trebilco, “Christians in the Lycus Valley,” 195. See too Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 27.

well as Kolossai, suggesting there was significant interaction.²³ The interconnectedness between communities enabled the transfer of ideas and movements.²⁴ This collaborative ministry approach of Paul the apostle supports the networking theory,²⁵ and given that Paul's colleague Epaphras likely established the *ekklesia* in Kolossai on Pauline foundations,²⁶ the collaborative approach may have been sustained throughout the Lykos Valley.²⁷

Indigenous, mostly rural or village dwelling groups numbered among the inhabitants of the valley.²⁸ These groups engaged with urban Christians, as well as other cultural groups, in Kolossai, Hierapolis and Laodikeia through trade, social and political interactions. Through acculturative processes, religious and other ideas and even practices would have mutually influenced the indigenous pagan and the Christian groups. In an assimilation theory framework, acculturation worked mutually between different groups. Through acculturation, the

²³ Kol 2.1: θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι ἡλίκον ἀγῶνα ἔχω ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ καὶ ὅσοι οὐχ ἑώρακαν τὸ πρόσωπόν μου ἐν σαρκί – *for I wish you to know how much I have a struggle on behalf of you and of those in Laodikeia and as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.*

²⁴ Trebilco, "Christians in the Lycus Valley," 184.

²⁵ Vicky Balabanski, "Where is Philemon? The Case for a Logical Fallacy in the Correlation of the Data in Philemon and Colossians 1.1-2; 4.7-18," *JSNT* 38/2 (2015): 144, and note 31 on this ministerial approach.

²⁶ Kol 1.7-8: καθὼς ἐμάθετε ἀπὸ Ἐπαφρᾶ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ συνδούλου ἡμῶν, ὅς ἐστιν πιστὸς ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διάκονος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ καὶ δηλώσας ἡμῖν τὴν ὑμῶν ἀγάπην ἐν πνεύματι – *just as you learned from Epaphras our beloved fellow slave, who is a faithful servant of Christ on your behalf, who showed to us your love in the spirit;* and 4.12-13: ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Ἐπαφρᾶς ὁ ἐξ ὑμῶν, δούλος Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ], πάντοτε ἀγωνιζόμενος ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς προσευχαῖς, ἵνα σταθῆτε τέλειοι καὶ πεπληροφορημένοι ἐν παντὶ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ – *Epaphras who is one of you, greets you, a slave of Christ [Jesus], who is always struggling on your behalf in prayers, so that you may stand complete and have been fully assured in all things by the will of god.* These verses emphasise that Epaphras was from Kolossai, even if not present in the Kolossian *ekklesia* when the letter was received. On the significant role of Epaphras in the Christian community at Kolossai, and the social networking that took place see: Michael Trainor, *Epaphras: Paul's Educator at Colossae*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2008).

²⁷ See Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 88-9.

²⁸ Strelan, "The Languages of the Lycus Valley," 85 says that most of the inhabitants of the valley lived in small towns, large estates or small rural villages; and 88-9 that there were many rural dwellers in the valley, which was why indigenous language prevailed over Greek.

ideas and customs of one group gained currency in another if they did not conflict with core group identity parameters. It is likely that some indigenous pagans became members of *ekklesiai* if they were familiar with ritual practices which looked toward a highest god. The discovery of inscriptions with Phrygian dialectical variations confirms that there were indigenous pagans in the Lykos Valley who were not highly acculturated with the Hellenistic mainstream.²⁹

The establishment of the *ekklesiai* in the Lykos Valley created reactions with other cultural groups.³⁰ There is evidence of hostile reactions in the letter at 4.5-6:

ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω τὸν καιρὸν ἐξαγοραζόμενοι. ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν πάντοτε ἐν χάριτι, ἄλατι ἠρτυμένος, εἰδέναι πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς ἐνὶ ἐκάστῳ ἀποκρίνεσθαι
go about with wisdom towards the ones on the outside making good use of the time. Let your word be always with grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how it is necessary to answer each one.

Hostility contributed to a degree of suffering among Christians,³¹ both within their *ekklesiai* and with other religious groups. Conflict and division created by hostility nonetheless represented the diversity of membership, robustness of community, and interest in wider connectivity with other Christians.³² Conflict and division were also results of the new religious situation into which Christianity grew.

In summary, what little can be determined about Christian communities in the Lykos Valley comes from the biblical correspondence. Christian monumental architecture, artefactual

²⁹ Strelan, "The Languages of the Lycus Valley," 96 on Phrygian influence on inscriptions.

³⁰ Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 68-9 discusses hostile reactions to the *ekklesia* as one of the problems undergirding the writing of the letter.

³¹ Trebilco, "Christians in the Lycus Valley," 186.

³² Trebilco, "Christians in the Lycus Valley," 183.

evidence and other literature comes later than the period discussed here.

The letter gives insight into the inclusion of Jewish people, people in the margins of Judaism, traditional pagans, and minority group pagans as members of the *ekklesiai* in the Lykos Valley. Network and communication is evident between the Lykos Valley Christians, meaning ideas and resources were shared. The diversity of cultural backgrounds of members was unified in a common desire to be part of a new religious group with a monotheistic orientation toward god. I now move into a discussion of the letter and highlight division in the community, which I suggest reflects the retention of previous ideas about god and practices of approach to god.

9.2 The Letter to the Kolossians

The Letter to the Kolossians is a text intended for Christian communities in the Lykos Valley. It was to be shared among their *ekklesiai*, as indicated at 4.16.³³ In the comparatively small area of the Lykos Valley resources such as letters were highly valued. Sharing in resources was made possible through good communication processes, roads, and proximity of communities to each other. Kol 4.16 advocates sharing of the letter and supports Trebilco's conclusion that Christian communities in the Lykos Valley practised collaborative ministry.³⁴

The letter was sent to the Lykos Valley in the second half of the first century CE. There is no scholarly consensus on the actual date of composition. This rests largely with issues of authorship of the letter.

³³ Kol 4.16: καὶ ὅταν ἀναγνωσθῇ παρ' ὑμῖν ἡ ἐπιστολή, ποιήσατε ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ Λαοδικέων ἐκκλησίᾳ ἀναγνωσθῇ, καὶ τὴν ἐκ Λαοδικείας ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀναγνῶτε – *and when this letter has been read among you, make sure it is read in the ekklesia in Laodikeia, and that you read the letter from Laodikeia*. Reference is made to Laodikeia at 2.1, 4.15-16, and to Laodikeia and Hierapolis at 4.13.

³⁴ Trebilco, "Christians in the Lycus Valley," 207.

If the letter was written by the apostle Paul then an earlier date, prior to 65, the approximate year of his death, is preferred. If the early 60s is proposed, with Paul as author, the contents of the Kolossian letter suggests that his theology had developed significantly from his earlier letters, especially in his expression of Christology and cosmology.³⁵ Development from early Pauline theology is especially notable in the hymn in Chapter One, and in the author's application of the hymn throughout the letter. An example of this is found in 1.18 where Christ is ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος, the head of the body. This suggests movement from early Pauline writing in which the *ekklesia* is the body of Christ.³⁶ If the letter were written by Paul, much movement happened in theological development, a high language register, including the use of *hapax legomena*, and complex style.³⁷ None of this suggests that Paul was incapable of such development. The content of the undisputed letters of Paul in response to the issues which arose in the *ekklesiai* founded by his ministry all indicate a highly competent leader and theologian, well capable of addressing conflict and division.

If the letter was written by a colleague, student or successor of Paul then a date after the 60s is likely.³⁸ One of the most cogent recent analyses of the letter as pseudepigraphy is by Bart Ehrman, in which he evaluates Kolossians as an early Pauline forgery dealing with eschatology.³⁹ Ehrman depicts a highly polemical context which differs from the focus of this thesis on assimilative processes; nevertheless, the arguments in favour of pseudepigraphy are substantial.

³⁵ McDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 10; Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, 6.

³⁶ Eg., Rom 12.5; 1 Cor 12.12-27.

³⁷ See discussion in Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 110-17.

³⁸ Although this does not discount authorship by someone else whilst Paul was alive and in prison. See James D. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 39-41 on the "bridge character" of the letter, overlapping the possibilities of authorship by Paul or another.

³⁹ Bart Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 171-182.

The question of authorship is only relevant to this thesis insofar as it pertains to the letter's provenance and dating. My discussion on the content of the letter and its cultural context is not dependent on *who* wrote the letter. Only the issue of whether the letter can be confidently associated with Kolossai in the second half of the first century is of relevance to this discussion. It is therefore beyond the scope of this thesis to offer a full discussion of authorship, which many others have adequately considered.⁴⁰ Few scholars even among those who support the theory of pseudepigraphy cut the letter loose from the provenance of Asia Minor, though there is doubt that Kolossians were the actual intended recipients.⁴¹

If one can speak of a consensus position, it is articulated by Ernst Käsemann: if an authentic Pauline letter, as late as possible on account of the style; if not authentic, as early as possible.⁴² My position is therefore simply to date the Kolossian correspondence to the second half of the first century CE, keeping the provenance of Kolossai as the best indicator we have. As I am not at this point persuaded by arguments for the authorship of Paul, I will refer to the writer of the

⁴⁰ On dating and authorship see for example and among many, MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 7, who applies a social-scientific lens to the letter to suggest a crisis in leadership following the death of a significant leader and the effort to enforce the authority of Paul's co-workers, indicating Paul had already died, and 9-10 who suggests a date between 57-63, toward the end of Paul's career; Dunn, *Colossians*, 35, 41 who decides on authorship by someone other than Paul, but also significantly suggests at 39, that the letter rests: "on the trajectory of Pauline theology at or near the margin of the transition from 'Pauline' to 'post-Pauline' theology."; Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 4, agrees with authorship other than Paul; N. T. Wright, "Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1.15-20," *New Testament Studies* 36, (1990): 444, who argues for authentic authorship by Paul; as does Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, 6-7. Matthew E. Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, WUNT 228 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 4-5 says the author is likely Paul, but agrees that no consensus exists.

⁴¹ Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery*, 182.

⁴² Ernst Käsemann, *Kolossierbrief*, 1728, cited by Petr Pokorný, *Colossians: A Commentary*, trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 4.

letter in anonymous terms.⁴³ Neither is extensive discussion on the location of the composition of the letter useful for this thesis.⁴⁴

For the structural breakdown of the letter I follow Dunn's model as follows.⁴⁵

Address and Greeting: 1.1-2⁴⁶

Extended Thanksgiving: 1.3-23

Thanksgiving (1.3-8)

Prayer for the Kolossian recipients (1.9-14)

A hymn in praise of Christ (1.15-20)

Reconciliation and response (1.21-23)

Personal Statement: 1.24-2.5

Paul's commitment to the gospel (1.24-29)

Paul's commitment to the Kolossians (2.1-5)

The Theme of the Letter: 2.6-4.6

The thematic statement (2.6-7)

The cross of Christ renders unnecessary any further human traditions and rules (2.8-23)

The scope of Christ's accomplishments on the cross (2.8-15)

Beware of claims that there are more important practices and experiences (2.16-19)

Life in Christ does not depend on observance of Jewish practices (2.20-23)

The pattern of living that follows from the cross (3.1-4.6)

The perspective from which the Christian life should be lived (3.1-4)

General guidelines and practical exhortations (3.5-17)

Household rules (3.18-4.1)

⁴³ Interestingly, ancient commentators on the letter did not question its authenticity as a letter of Paul.

⁴⁴ It is impossible to discern the location of the composition of the letter, especially if Paul had already died. Ephesus appears likely due to the familiarity of the author with the cultural environment of Asia Minor. However, this is not to say that someone who had visited the area could have written it from somewhere else. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 10 suggests Rome or Ephesus as two possible locations if Paul wrote the letter, or at least authorised writing the letter. In Rome Paul was imprisoned. There are several likely references to imprisonment in the letter: Kol 1.24; 4.3, 10, 18. However these do not affirm Paul's authorship.

⁴⁵ Dunn, *Colossians*, 41-2.

⁴⁶ Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 241, says the opening (1.1-2) and closing (4.7-18) sections follow the conventions of official ancient letters.

Concluding exhortations (4.2-6)

Conclusion: 4.7-18

Maintaining communication (4.7-9)

Greetings (4.10-17)

A final, personal greeting (4.18)

From the four chapters of the letter, the significant work of this thesis will be based in Chapters One and Two.

Now that I have introduced the letter, I turn to the situations which appear to precipitate the writing of the letter to the Kolossian *ekklesia*. There are points of conflict evident in the letter. These reflect the diverse cultural makeup of the *ekklesia* and the wider pagan and Jewish religious practices I have described throughout this thesis. I then move on from conflict to the hymn, its influences and purpose in the letter.

9.3 Conflict in Kolossai

Assimilation processes at work in the *ekklesia* at Kolossai uncover conflict that was connected to the influence of ritual practices from other religious groups. Practices belonging to minority pagan and Jewish groups migrated with the new members into the *ekklesia* and influenced worship and community life. I suggest that these practices included public confession, *angeli* devotion, and some Jewish rituals. Behind these stood an attitude of humility before the gods typical of indigenous pagan groups mindful of a high god who controlled their lives and well-being. Overarching was a vision of the universe framed by Greek philosophical reasoning. I will expand on these things below.

A focus of this thesis is to investigate pagan monotheistic activity in Asia Minor. Assimilation theory assists the process of investigation. Pagan monotheistic groups numbered among minority groups in the Hellenistic mainstream, and assimilation theory takes the perspective

of minority groups. Study of the Christian *ekklesiai* through an assimilation theory method begins to fill a gap in scholarship. The influence of pagan monotheistic practices on conflict at Kolossai has been understudied, unlike Jewish or Hellenistic philosophical influences. When studied, cult practices have been named syncretistic with Judaism.⁴⁷ Throughout this thesis I have sought to dismantle labels of syncretism and replace them with an appreciation of diverse practices emerging through processes of positive cultural assimilation from an environment which supported a developing religious situation.

In this section, I set out the likely causes of conflict in Kolossai and the points of issue to which the writer responded. In doing this I acknowledge that space does not permit the extensive investigation that the subject deserves. However, for the purposes of developing this chapter a brief survey of conflict in Kolossai is sufficient.

The evidence of conflict discovered in the letter is connected to the influence of ritual practices from other religious groups. There is a relationship between these practices and the hymn. The hymn is integral to the construction of the letter, whether it was composed by the author or imported into the text. The hymn in the letter is utilised as a response to some unique practices that were occurring in the *ekklesia*. Scholars have identified these practices as points of conflict within the *ekklesiai*. No other biblical text responds to the same issues as the Kolossian letter.⁴⁸ The bases for naming conflict in Kolossai are found in Chapter Two of the letter.

⁴⁷ For example, Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*; Richard E. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae*, JSNTSS 96 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994); Martin Dibelius, "Die Isisweihe bei Apuleius und verwandte Initiations-Riten," (1917), republished as, "The Isis Initiation in Apuleius and Related Initiatory Rites," in Fred O. Francis and Wayne Meeke (eds.), *Conflict at Colossae*, (Montana: Society of Biblical Literature and Scholars Press, 1975): 61-122; Dunn, *Colossians*; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*.

⁴⁸ Each Pauline letter responds to its particularly intended context.

Conflict in Kolossai has been debated widely in scholarship without consensus about the causes of conflict or who was the conflicting person or group. Scholars have presented various theories about what was happening.⁴⁹ Theories have concentrated on identifying what the issues were, how they were affecting the community, and which group or groups were involved. DeMaris summarises theories into five groups: Jewish Gnosticism; Gnostic Judaism; ascetic, apocalyptic and mystical Judaism; Hellenistic syncretism; Hellenistic philosophy.⁵⁰

My perspective on the background of conflict at Kolossai aligns with some previously established theories which involve a wider cultural context, such as Matthew Gordley and Martin Dibelius offer. I do think that competing teaching in the Kolossian *ekklesia* and the presence of one or more rival factions has been overstated. Overemphasis on determining the causes of conflict and who were the proponents of these things has detracted from the wider context of the letter and the cultural environment in which it was set. An emphasis on rival groups takes away from discerning the subtler indications of minority group influence from wider cultural sources.

In an environment of religious change, where individual choice in religious groups of the new type was becoming available, the likelihood of diversity of background of members was high. With diversity came different ideas about god, different background cultic practices, different ways of approaching god. Conflict and division were a result of this diversity.

I suggest that the various religious practices that formed the backgrounds of members coming into the *ekklesia* were influential on other members in some degree. Some of these practices became popular, thus the need for the letter to remind people of the way to

⁴⁹ An excellent survey of the history of the scholarship of conflict in Kolossai may be found in DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy*, 18-40.

⁵⁰ DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy*, 38-9.

approach to god, through Christ, as set out in the Pauline foundations of the community, learned from Epaphras, Paul's colleague in ministry. The fact that the letter was intended for the *ekklesiai* of at least Kolossai and Laodikeia indicates the practices that were causing the writer concern, and which I suggest originated in other religious cults, were wider than the internal dynamics of the Kolossian Christian community.

Broadly, issues contested at Kolossai were deception (Kol 2.4, 8), leading to an emphasis on rules (2.16, 20-21), practice of *angeloi* worship (2.18), reliance on other mediatorial beings (2.8, 20), self-abasement (2.18), visionary experience (2.18), ascetic practices of the body (2.23). All these things drew away from reliance of Christians on the complete salvific object of Christ. These issues will be explained below.

9.3.1 Points of conflict identified in the text

Over eighty years ago, A. D. Nock advised caution when entering the specifics of words and phrases in the letter which have been identified as points of conflict within the *ekklesia*. Nock's caution reminds us that Greek writers characteristically avoided specialisation of words.⁵¹ This means that the specific meanings we apply today from our modern reading of the text hold precariously in the ancient context. Greek words and phrases were intended to be flexible, beautiful even, unconstrained by modern restrictive meanings.⁵² It is with this

⁵¹ Arthur Darby Nock, "The Vocabulary of the New Testament," *JBL* 52 no. 2/3 (1933): 136, who says: "There was something deeply rooted in the Greek genius which made against the specialization of words. Words, like books, have become very commonplace with us; they have lost the freshness and magic which was once theirs."

⁵² Thus, the beautiful, poetic quality of the hymn, 1.15-20, which contains words which express a deep reality of the things described.

background that the letter, the hymn, and the conflicting issues may be approached.

The writer addresses the issues of diverging religious ideas and practices in Chapter Two of the letter, after the preparatory exhortative words and giving of the hymn in Chapter One. He presents himself in the persona of Paul (1.1, 23; 4.18). This gives him authority and respect.

At 2.4 the notion of deception of the members is raised:

τοῦτο λέγω, ἵνα μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς παραλογίζεται ἐν πιθανολογία.
I say this so that no one may mislead you with a probable argument.

The writer engages the specific issues with an acknowledgement that what the members were facing was probable to them, likely even, perhaps a natural development from previous practices. The writer contrasts himself with those in the *ekklesia* with diverging views (2.1-5) to establish his persona.⁵³

The theme of deception of members is continued at 2.8:

βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται ὁ συλαγωγῶν διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου καὶ οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν·
see that no one leads you to be a captive through philosophy and empty deceit according to the transmission of human ways, according to the elements of the universe and not according to Christ.

This verse represents the widespread understanding of the structure of the universe conveyed through Hellenistic philosophy. Jews, *theosebeis*, mainstream traditional pagans, and other minority groups and individuals, including pagan monotheists held this view, as did

⁵³ Harold Van Broekhoven, "The Social Profiles in the Colossian Debate," *JSNT* 66 (1997): 80.

Christians who came into the *ekklesia* from these various backgrounds.

Van Broekhoven advises modern readers not to equate φιλοσοφία with any one philosophical teaching or school. ‘Philosophy’ was used of various religious movements in this period.⁵⁴ This is wise advice given that some modern commentators refer to the issues at Kolossai as a ‘philosophy.’⁵⁵ More recently, there has been less scholarly emphasis on identifying a specific philosophical school, leaving interpretation of the term open.⁵⁶ The designation of a subgroup within the *ekklesia* as a philosophy supposes significant organisation of such a group. Given the diversity of background of membership at Kolossai and the variety of practices happening in the community, and presumably the diversity of other *ekklesiai* in the Lykos Valley, such as the group under the leadership of Nympha (4.15),⁵⁷ this does not seem likely.⁵⁸

If the φιλοσοφία was a type word for a platonic philosophical view of the universe, the writer may perceive it as a problem for the *ekklesia*. Within the hierarchical structure which made up the universe, levels of beings existed. These included the θρόνοι, κυριότητες, ἀρχαί, ἐξουσία of 1.16, the *angeli* of 2.18 and the στοιχεῖα of 2.8, 20. Attention to these beings drew away from the sole supremacy of Christ and from the writer’s point of view were to be deterred within the *ekklesia*.

The meaning of στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in 2.8, and στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου in 2.20 has been variously interpreted. Their use represents a philosophical vision of the universe shared by the writer and the members of the *ekklesia*, including those with divergent practices, as

⁵⁴ Van Broekhoven, “Social Profiles,” 81.

⁵⁵ For example, Dibelius, “The Isis Initiation,” 89.

⁵⁶ Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 124. This shift in scholarship he suggests is due to the “vague terminology and trains of thought in Colossians.”

⁵⁷ McDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 9, says Nympha’s house could have been in any of the three cities of the Lykos Valley.

⁵⁸ Van Broekhoven, “Social Profiles,” 89 does not identify any influence of a specific, elusive philosophical school.

well as other groups within the wider cultural environment. Ancient sources use the στοιχεῖα to refer to ‘the first and simplest component parts; the primary matter, elements.’⁵⁹ They belong to philosophical monotheism. In this view, the στοιχεῖα form the substance from which the rest is created.

The writer belonged to the same cultural world as the members of the *ekklesia*. He shared the same philosophical view of the universe. He affirms what was well known – by educated people through literary means in addition to cult experience, by less educated people through popular knowledge and cult backgrounds. This was a widely-held view of the universe, where a supreme divine figure was accessed through the mediation of other beings. Among this hierarchy of beings the elementary components, the στοιχεῖα, numbered. This view of the universe was behind the use of στοιχεῖα.

The writer is in this letter describing a new universal order, with Christ as κεφαλή, head. This order abolishes the need for mediatorial figures, including the στοιχεῖα as fundamental components of creation (2.8, 20), the θρόνοι, κυριότητες, ἀρχαί, ἐξουσίαι of 1.16, and the *angeli* of 2.18, in order to access the supreme divine. Christ as the only mediator necessary is behind the emphasis in the hymn on τὰ πάντα, all things, (1.16, 17, 20). All things in heaven and on earth belong to him, hold together in him. In fact, each verse in the hymn contains an ‘all’ word.⁶⁰ Additionally, there is an emphasis on πᾶν throughout the letter. This serves to elevate the supremacy of Christ beyond

⁵⁹ *LSJ*. Plato *Timaios* 48 B: αὐτὰ τιθέμενοι στοιχεῖα τοῦ πάντος – *arranging these things the elements of the whole*; and *Theaetetos* 201 E: τὰ πρῶτα οἷονπερὶ στοιχεῖα, ἐξ ὧν ἡμεῖς τε ξυγκείμεθα καὶ ἄλλα – *as it were these first things were elements, from which we and even other things have been put together*. In the philosophy of Aristotle *Metaphysics* 4.1.1, 4.3.1, the στοιχεῖα were distinguished from the ἀρχαί as the material was separated from the formal and motive causes. The ἀρχαί are numbered among the list of hierarchical abstractions in the hymn, 1.16.

⁶⁰ 1.15 πάσης κτίσεως; 1.16 τὰ πάντα (x 2); 1.17 πρὸ πάντων, τὰ πάντα; 1.18 ἐν πᾶσιν; 1.19 πᾶν; 1.20 τὰ πάντα.

everything else considered necessary to negotiate before accessing the highest god.

Some have identified the στοιχεῖα as demonic figures in a negative sense.⁶¹ In this view the στοιχεῖα are numbered along with the θρόνοι, κυριότητες, ἀρχαί and ἐξουσίαι in 1.16 as beings which are opposed to Christ. Arnold suggests these refer together to evil spirits.⁶² Arnold makes use of *The Testament of Solomon*, a Jewish magical text, as a source for the identification of στοιχεῖα as evil spirits. Within this text the demons describe themselves to Solomon as στοιχεῖα.⁶³ Dibelius on the other hand, interprets the στοιχεῖα as a “cult of the ‘elements,’” based on the value placed on the στοιχεῖα by certain members of the *ekklesia*.⁶⁴ His interpretation is based in pagan cultic practices which were brought into the Christian community. He claims that such a cult was behind the divergent practices at Kolossai, and that the proposed cult existed separately to the *ekklesia*.⁶⁵ Members attracted to the στοιχεῖα cult participated in both *ekklesia* and element-worship. Salvation in their eyes could only happen κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου καὶ οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν, according to the elements of the universe and not according to Christ. Dibelius’ explanation is compelling, but not I think substantiated by sufficient evidence.

The issue of members of the *ekklesia* practising humility and worshipping *angeloi* is set out by the writer at 2.18:

μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς καταβραβεύετω θέλων ἐν ταπεινοφροσύνῃ καὶ θρησκείᾳ
τῶν ἀγγέλων, ἃ* ἐόρακεν ἐμβατεύων, εἰκὴ φυσιοῦμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ
νοῦ τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ,

⁶¹ Arnold, “Sceva, Solomon, and Shamanism,” 22.

⁶² Arnold, “Sceva, Solomon, and Shamanism,” 22.

⁶³ Arnold, “Sceva, Solomon, and Shamanism,” 21. In its final form *The Testament of Solomon* postdates the New Testament.

⁶⁴ Dibelius, “Isis Initiation,” 82.

⁶⁵ Dibelius, “Isis Initiation,” 83, indicates that such a cult did not predate the Christian *ekklesia*.

don't let anyone pass judgement on you willing you into lowliness and worship of angeloi, stepping into things seen, being blown up without a purpose by the mind of the flesh.

A textual variant occurs in this verse following the ᾗ.⁶⁶ Translation of the ᾗ is awkward in its current position, and it is common for variants to occur at awkward points in the Greek. I take the ᾗ ἑώρακεν as the object of ἐμβατεύων, thus ‘stepping into things seen.’ This refers to the entering of visions. The inclusion of the negative variant, μή or οὐκ, doesn’t alter the interpretation of the verse significantly. The inclusion of a negative means ‘things not seen.’ The negative serves to emphasise the perceived incorrectness by the writer of the practice of relying on visionary experiences.

Detailed study into the various meanings of the *angeloi* devotion and humility has been vast, and the context frequently obscured by desires to determine correctly what was going on in the *ekklesia*. As long ago as 1962 Fred Francis named a “paralyzing effect” of the overstudy of this verse.⁶⁷

The main verb of this phrase καταβραβεύω, pass judgement on, rule against, is *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament. It contains the idea of athletic contests requiring an umpire and supports Van Broekhoven’s argument that rules and regulations dominate the position of those whose practices the writer critiques.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ The variant in UBS^{3,4} is given a {B} value in both editions, and appears in the apparatus as follows: ᾗ p⁴⁶ κ* A B D* I 33 1739 it^d, e, m cop^{sa}, bo eth Marcion Tertullian Origen^{gr}, lat Ambrosiaster Lucifer mss^{acc} to Jerome, Augustine Augustine ?// μή 81 // ᾗ μή κ^c C D^c K P Ψ 88 104 181 326 330 436 451 614 629 630 1241 1877 1881 1962 1984 1985 2127 2492 2495 Byz Lect it^{ar}, e, dem, div, f, g, mon, x, 2 vg syr^p, h goth arm Origen^{gr}, lat Ambrose Chrysostom Pelagius Jerome Theodore^{lat} Augustine Theodoret John-Damascus // ᾗ οὐκ G

⁶⁷ Fred O. Francis, “Humility and Angelic Worship in Col 2.18,” *Studia Theologica* 16/2 (1962): 113, and at 121-2, a critique of Martin Dibelius’ and E. Percy’s narrow interpretation of Kol 2.18: “concentration on one aspect of the passage has inhibited the interpretation of the whole.”

⁶⁸ Van Broekhoven, “Social Profiles,” 82. Also Francis, “Humility and Angelic Worship,” 110, who compares καταβραβεύω with παραβραβεύω, to award a prize

The word ταπεινοφροσύνη, lowliness, humility, holds an important place in pagan religious practices which tended towards monotheism. An attitude of humility stands behind what Stephen Mitchell describes as a monotheistic trend in Asia Minor.⁶⁹ Awe before the gods resulted from a sense of powerlessness and utter reliance on the gods for daily needs. The greatness of a highest god, unseen, but before whom human beings must abase themselves to deter the divine wrath, undergirds ταπεινοφροσύνη in a pagan monotheistic context. Thus, the εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, the icon of the unseen god, Christ in the hymn (1.15), exhibits the powers of the unseen, supreme god, before whom humility must be shown.

In situations where people practised public confession, where the rule of local gods of justice and vengeance administered the power of a highest, abstractly named god, or of *angeloi* devotion, worship of a highest god happened second hand, through these mediatorial figures.

The concern of the writer to deter practices which distracted members of the *ekklesia* from honouring Christ as the only highest god, without the mediation of other figures, is behind the condemnation of the attitude of humility in the context of the *ekklesia*. The writer addresses this in 2.20:

εἰ ἀπεθάνετε σὺν Χριστῷ ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου, τί ὡς ζῶντες ἐν κόσμῳ δογματίζεσθε;
if you died with Christ from the elements of universe, why do you live in the world obeying rules and regulations?

Why do you abase yourselves before mediators and submit to rules to access god when you have Christ?

unfairly, κατακρίνω, to condemn or pass judgement on, and βραβεύω, to umpire or rule.

⁶⁹ Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 92.

The condemnation is reinforced at 2.23, where ταπεινοφροσύνη is grouped with ascetic practices which together the writer presents as an attitude of false humility:

ἅτινά ἐστιν λόγον μὲν ἔχοντα σοφίας ἐν ἐθελοθρησκία καὶ ταπεινοφροσύνη [καὶ]* ἀφειδία σώματος, οὐκ ἐν τιμῇ τι πρὸς πλησμονὴν τῆς σαρκός.

These such things are on the one hand conveying wisdom by self-willed religious service and humility [and] harsh treatment of body, while without value towards some kind of fulfilment of the flesh.

The variant in this verse is highly contested.⁷⁰ Sound manuscript evidence attests to the inclusion of the καί, and to the omission of the καί. The interpretation of the verse is not altered significantly by either its inclusion or omission. The very interesting variant attested in the apparatus is the ταπεινοφροσύνη τοῦ νοῦ καί, lowliness of the mind. This version has less strength of manuscript attestation. However it does intentionally reflect back to 2.18, where the one who participates in the practice of lowliness and *angeloi* devotion is εἰκῆ φυσιοῦμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ νοῦ τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ, blown up without a purpose by the mind of his flesh. Here humility of the mind is paralleled with an overblown, puffed up⁷¹ human mind. The variant emphasises the falseness of the humility, which fits the purposes of the writer, even if the manuscript evidence is weak.

The meaning of ταπεινοφροσύνη shifts in 3.12:

ἐνδύσασθε οὖν, ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ἅγιοι καὶ ἡγαπημένοι, σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ χρηστότητα ταπεινοφροσύνην πραύτητα μακροθυμίαν

⁷⁰ The UBS^{3, 4} versions of the variant in 2.23 read as follows: {D} ταπεινοφροσύνη καὶ κα A C D^{gr} H K P Ψ 33 81 88 104 181 326 330 436 451 629 630 1241 1877 1881 1962 1984 1985 2127 2492 2495 *Byz Lect* it^c, dem, div, x, z vg syr^p cop^{sa} arm Jerome Augustine Euthalius // ταπεινοφροσύνη τοῦ νοῦ καί (see 2.18) G it^{ar}, d, e, f, g (it^m, mon *omit* καί) syr^h (cop^{bo}) (goth) (Ambrosiaster) Hilary Pelagius (Augustine) // ταπεινοφροσύνη p⁴⁶ B 1739 Origen^{lat} Ambrosiaster Hilary Ambrose Pelagius Paulinus-Nola // ταπεινοφροσύνης Clement

⁷¹ 'Puffed up' is the *NRSV* translation of φυσιοῦμενος.

*clothe yourselves then, as chosen of god sanctified and beloved,
with inward mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience*

Here ταπεινοφροσύνη is portrayed in a more positive way, encouraging members to wear proper humility as the clothing of Christ. The meaning of ταπεινοφροσύνη conforms more closely to its meaning of ‘humility’ in the New Testament beyond Kol 2.18, 23, as a trait of Jesus to which followers are called to emulate.⁷²

In a mainstream Hellenistic context, the root ταπειν- is more closely related to status and condition, to being low, poor and submissive. It is not a positive attribute.⁷³

Other scholars have noted the influence of practices from pagan religious groups in 2.18. Martin Dibelius’ early work on ἐμβατεύω provides parallels between this verse and inscriptions of Apollo from Klaros and in the initiation of Apuleius into the cult of Isis.⁷⁴ This angle takes interpretations into the field of mystery cults and oracle processes.⁷⁵

If oracle processes can be shown in the use of ἐμβατεύω in inscriptions, as suggested by Huttner,⁷⁶ then given the wider context of theological oracles as expressions of the nature of god, it is reasonable to draw some attention to the placement of this word in 2.18.

⁷² Timothy J. Harris, “The Subversion of Status: Pauline Notions of Humility and Deference in Graeco-Roman Perspective, with Special Reference to Stoicism and Epictetus,” (PhD Diss., Flinders University of South Australia, 2004), 428.

⁷³ T. Harris, “The Subversion of Status,” 428, who calls its use outside of the New Testament derogatory.

⁷⁴ Dibelius, “The Isis Initiation,” referring to the initiation of Apuleius throughout, and 84-8 on the inscriptions of Apollo at Klaros. Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 147, notes the influence of cults of Isis on the background of the New Testament world.

⁷⁵ Dibelius, “The Isis Initiation,” 89, calls the φιλοσοφία of 2.8 a mystery religion.

⁷⁶ Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 130-31.

Dibelius says that ἐμβατεύω refers to initiation in the verse.⁷⁷ He refers to six second century CE inscriptions linking ἐμβατεύω and μύεω, to initiate into the mysteries, or μύεω and ἐπιτελέω, accomplish (an entry into the mysteries).⁷⁸ He suggests that ἐμβατεύω in these inscriptions refers to entrance into the “oracle cave.”⁷⁹ If this is correct, the meaning of the phrase in 2.18 was especially directed towards those who had been initiated into this cult. These would not have revealed ὅ ἐώρακεν ἐμβατεύων, what they had seen in their visions, because of the background of mystery initiation, which required secrecy from initiates.

However, these inscriptional references are not to theological oracles. They do not expressly respond to questions asked the oracular god about the nature of god. If they do relate to initiation into the mysteries of a certain pagan cult or cults, they are to be more narrowly interpreted as such. This would support Dibelius’ supposition that the word ἐμβατεύω was a technical term, to be defined within pagan mystery contexts.⁸⁰ In the context of 2.18 ἐμβατεύω is not to be defined in a such a narrow sense. The inscriptions, which are reported to be from the sanctuary at Klaros, do refer to cultic mystery initiation, but may not be linked to initiation by ἐμβατεύω, which occurs without either μύεω or ἐπιτελέω, in 2.18.

Nock in 1933 considered ἐμβατεύω as a word which New Testament writers found readily useable from its religious meaning in Graeco-Roman contexts.⁸¹ He discerned that inscriptional uses of the word ἐμβατεύω and μνεῖσθαι/μύεω did not have the same meaning as Dibelius

⁷⁷ Francis, “Humility and Angelic Worship,” 121, disputes this conclusion. See Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 139, who offers a translation of ἐμβατεύω in 2.18 as ‘initiate.’

⁷⁸ Dibelius, “The Isis Initiation,” 85-6.

⁷⁹ Dibelius, “The Isis Initiation,” 86.

⁸⁰ Dibelius, “The Isis Initiation,” 87-8 says the technical, cultic usage of ἐμβατεύω is affirmed by the inscriptions.

⁸¹ Nock, “The Vocabulary of the New Testament,” 132.

presented in his analysis of the Klarian oracles.⁸² He did however, suggest a local context: “It may be that there was a divergent local use of the word.”⁸³ Huttner agrees on a local context for the word ἔμβατεύω, saying that, “If the author of Colossians adopted a technical term from the sacral language of the region, this suggests convergences of religious concepts in Colossae, so that the encounters of pagans and Jews with the deity could be based on a common experience.”⁸⁴ Whilst Nock’s Judaizing referent is loosely applied to those whom the writer condemns, he nonetheless provides a wider contextual lens for the interpretation of ἔμβατεύω, bringing in the local environment in which the *ekklesia* was set.

I suggest that the word ἔμβατεύω from 2.18 does not refer to mystery cult initiation. I say this because ἔμβατεύω occurs without other indicators of initiation such as μυέω and ἐπιτελέω. I think it is related to a critique the writer was making of members of the *ekklesia* placing too much emphasis on visions. Although I discount mystery cult initiation in relation to the word ἔμβατεύω, there is still a viable connection with oracle processes. As discussed in the previous chapter, the prophet or the *mantis* of Apollo was subject to visions.⁸⁵ Also in the wider context of practices of public confession, offenders may hear of their transgression through a vision.⁸⁶

Worship of *angeloi* is another disputed phrase in 2.18. I am unconvinced by arguments that θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων acts as a subjective genitive, by which the *angeloi* themselves are worshipping

⁸² Nock, “The Vocabulary of the New Testament,” 132.

⁸³ Nock, “The Vocabulary of the New Testament,” 132-3, refers to “Judaizing teachers” who in Kolossai adopted a type of initiatory rite.

⁸⁴ Hutter, *Early Christianity*, 131.

⁸⁵ Again, the classical example of Kasandra serves to express the reception of the prophesying god’s vision: ἰοὺ ἰοὺ, ὦ ὦ κακά. ὑπ’ αὐ̄ με δεινὸς ὀρθομαντείας πόνος στοβεῖ ταρασσῶν φορομίσις δυσφορομίσις. *Woe, woe, O, O terrible things. Again the fearful toil of true prophecy abuses me, stirring up openings to unlucky preludes.* Aischylos Agamemnon 1214-16.

⁸⁶ See Chapter Five, section 5.6 on transgression, confession and penance.

god.⁸⁷ More likely is it an objective genitive, whereby the *angeloi* are the objects of worship by members of the *ekklesia*.⁸⁸ Worship of *angeloi*, in the objective sense, is certainly the pagan context in western Asia Minor. The use of θρησκεία in a pagan cult setting is established in epigraphical evidence.⁸⁹

The tradition of worshipping *angeloi* was sustained in the Lykos Valley long after the issuing of the letter to the *ekklesiai*. Canon 35 of the Council of Laodikeia⁹⁰ warns Christians not to participate in *angeloi* veneration.⁹¹ The condemnation is reiterated by Theodoret in the first half of the fifth century.⁹²

Stories of Michael the Archangel originate in the region.⁹³ Chapels of the same Michael survive even until today.

⁸⁷ For example, Francis, “Humility and Angelic Worship,” 129.

⁸⁸ As Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, 91-2.

⁸⁹ SIG³ 801D line 4: τὴν θρησκείαν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος τοῦ Πυθίου – *the worship of the Pythian Apollo*. Although this evidence is from beyond Asia, in central Greece, it still confirms the cultic use of θρησκεία.

⁹⁰ Held in 363-4 CE.

⁹¹ The text of Canon 35 reads as follows: “Ὅτι οὐ χριστιανούς ἐγκαταλείπειν τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἀπιέναι, καὶ ἀγγέλους ὀνομάζειν, καὶ συναζεῖς ποιεῖν, ἅπερ ἀπηγόρευεται. Εἴ τις οὖν εὗρεθῆ ταύτῃ τῇ κεκρυμμένῃ εἰδολατρεία σχολάζων, ἔστω ἀνάθεμα, ὅτι ἐγκατέλειπε τὸν Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν, τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ εἰδολατρία προσῆλθεν – *For Christians may not forsake the ekklesia of god, and go away, and call upon angeloi, and make gatherings, these are forbidden. Therefore if anyone has been found devoting themselves to the hidden idolatry, let that one be anathema, because he has forsaken our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of god, and gone into idolatry.* Greek text cited in Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 143.

⁹² Theodoret *Interpretatio epist. Ad Coloss.* PG 82.613: Ἐμεινε δὲ τοῦτο τὸ πάθος ἐν τῇ Φρυγίᾳ καὶ Πισιδίᾳ μέχρι πολλοῦ. Οὐ δὲ χάριν καὶ συνελθοῦσα σύνοδος ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ τῆς Φρυγίας, νόμῳ κεκάλυκε τὸ τοῖς ἀγγέλοις προσεύχεσθαι· καὶ μέχρι δὲ τοῦ νῦν εὐκτήρια τοῦ ἁγίου Μιχαὴλ παρ’ ἐκείνοις καὶ τοῖς ὁμόροις ἐκείνων ἔστιν ἰδεῖν – *this disease remained for a long time in Phrygia and Pisidia. Indeed for this reason a synod gathered in Laodikeia of Phrygia, in a law it has forbidden the praying to the angeloi; and until now the oratories of the holy Michael are to be seen among them and those neighbouring them.* Citation and Greek text in Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 137. See also Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 128-9.

⁹³ A translation of a Greek text of one of the Michael traditions by Alan Cadwallader, “The Story of the Archistrategos, St Michael of Chonai,” can be found as an Appendix in Cadwallader and Trainor, (eds.) *Colossae in Space and Time*, 323-330. It retells the salvific act of the archangel to preserve the site of a miraculous healing spring where a sacred shrine was built and which evil opponents intended to destroy. An eighth century redaction of the story is likely built on an earlier, possibly fifth century CE story. See Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 132.



Figure 19: A possible site of a Christian *ekklesia* dedicated to S. Michael from the unexcavated site of Kolossai. Photo source: author, 2005.

Through the evidence of a sacred spring associated with Michael in Kolossai, and supported by the literary tradition of a salvific angelic act, it seems that prior to the fourth century and the authorisation of Christianity over pagan sacred sites, that Christians and pagans both sought the assistance of Michael the Archangel.⁹⁴

The origin of these traditions is likely to be based in a shared culture between pagans, Jews and Christians, and a shared understanding of the presence of *angeloï* at certain sites.⁹⁵ I suggest that the pagan practices of *angeloï* devotion described in this thesis are antecedents of both the later condemnation of worshipping *angeloï*, and the issue addressed in the biblical letter. The argument put forward by Cline that evidence of pagan *angeloï* devotion did not arise until at least a

⁹⁴ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 133.

⁹⁵ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 105.

century after the letter was written does not provide sufficient case to dismiss the connection.⁹⁶ Later material can be used to elucidate an earlier situation, as both Arnold and Gordley have shown.⁹⁷

Worship of *angeloi* did not suddenly appear in the second century. Apart from the long record of *angeloi* in Jewish traditions predating the common era, evidence of Mēn and his *angelos*⁹⁸ suggest that Anatolian pagans honoured *angeloi* in their religious traditions.⁹⁹ Devotion to Mēn and any other pagan god who might have been associated with an *angelos*, predated the bulk of the inscriptional evidence. Even if there were no cults of *angeloi* in the Lykos Valley itself,¹⁰⁰ it is possible to take the inscriptional evidence of *angeloi* from wider Phrygia and Karia in the second century, both pagan and Jewish,¹⁰¹ and seek insights from these of a situation which the letter writer might be responding to in Kolossai.

Following the precedent of Arnold and Gordley, I make use of later material to elucidate earlier situations in this study by applying the insights from the theological oracle from Oinoanda to the Kolossian *ekklesia*.¹⁰²

Returning to the subject of conflict, and *angeloi* devotion in the *ekklesia* at Kolossai, the writer took the issue of θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων

⁹⁶ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 140 n. 8.

⁹⁷ Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism*, 17-20 addresses the issue of ‘date’ by assessing fourth and fifth century CE magical papyri against first century CE documents. He claims that evidence of magical practices can be shown to have existed on historical grounds other than the textual. Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 164 makes comparative use of Orphic hymns composed in the third and fourth centuries CE with the hymn contained in the Kolossian letter. He justifies this because the textual versions of the Orphic hymns contain evidence of elements of worship of Orpheus and of Greek religion in general.

⁹⁸ Petzl, *Beichtinschriften*, 48: καθὼς ἡμῖν ἐδηλώθη ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ θεοῦ Μηνὸς Πετραεῖτου Ἀξετηνοῦ· – *just as it was manifested by the angelos of Mēn Petraeitos Axetēnos*.

⁹⁹ See Chapter Six, sections 6.6 and 6.7.

¹⁰⁰ As Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 129-30.

¹⁰¹ See Arnold’s chapter on “The Veneration of Angels in Judaism,” in *The Colossian Syncretism*, 32-60.

¹⁰² See below.

(2.18), as the other condemnations in the letter, as a problem because devotion to *angeloi* diverted members from the sole worship required to be given to god through Christ. Worship directed toward *angeloi* is similarly discouraged in the Book of Revelation.¹⁰³ Dibelius interprets the phrase θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων as the equivalent of θρησκεία τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου, based on his identification of an ‘element cult’ which had members participating in the *ekklesia* as well as that cult.¹⁰⁴ Whilst the *angeloi* and στοιχεῖα were part of the philosophically constructed universe, they were not the same. The στοιχεῖα came first,¹⁰⁵ the *angeloi* were part of the population of the strata, distinct from the elements.

The interpretation of the word θρησκεία, religious worship, or religion generally, from θρησκεύω, to observe religiously, hold religious services; to worship or adore; has been generally given as ‘worship.’ Cline notes its wider meaning as a system of worship, or cult.¹⁰⁶

The *angeloi* populated the stratified universe that is laid out in the hymn (1.16). Apollo identified himself as an *angelos* in the Oinoanda oracle. In this view of the universe, the *angeloi* acted as mediators: μεικρὰ δὲ θεοῦ μερὶς ἄγγελοι, we *angeloi* are but a small portion of god,

¹⁰³ Rev 19.10: καὶ ἔπεσα ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ. καὶ λέγει μοι, Ὅρα μὴ· σύνδουλός σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ· τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον. ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας – *and I fell down before his (the angelos’) feet to worship him. And he said to me, ‘Do not do that! I am a fellow slave with you and of your colleagues who have the witness of Jesus; worship god. For the witness of Jesus is the spirit of the gift of divine interpretation.* The condemnation is repeated at 22.8-9: καγὼ Ἰωάννης ὁ ἀκούων καὶ βλέπων ταῦτα. καὶ ὅτε ἤκουσα καὶ ἔβλεψα, ἔπεσα προσκυνῆσαι ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ δεικνύοντός μοι ταῦτα. καὶ λέγει μοι, Ὅρα μὴ· σύνδουλός σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῶν τηρούντων τοὺς λόγους τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου· τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον – *I am John who hears and sees these things. And when I heard and I saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angelos who revealed these things to me. And he said to me, ‘Do not do that!’ I am a fellow slave with you and your colleagues the prophets keeping the words of this book. Worship god.* The references identifying *angeloi* devotion in the Book of Revelation might indicate that this was a religious practice to be discouraged in the Christian *ekklesiai*.

¹⁰⁴ Dibelius, “The Isis Initiation,” 83-4.

¹⁰⁵ See note 50 above on the primary constitution of the στοιχεῖα, that they were the building blocks, the mitochondria of material construction.

¹⁰⁶ Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 139-40.

as Apollo reports in the oracle. The *angeloi* mediated the presence and power of the supreme god.

The letter writer also responded to practices in Kolossai by some members that were focussed around rules and regulations. The rules and regulations addressed in the letter were interfering with Christians relying solely on Christ.

In Kol 2.16 members are exhorted not to be condemned in matters of food, drink, festivals, new moons and Sabbaths:

Μὴ οὖν τις ὑμᾶς κρινέτω ἐν βρώσει καὶ ἐν πόσει ἢ ἐν μέρει ἑορτῆς
ἢ νεομηνίας ἢ σαββάτων·
*don't let anyone judge you in food or in drink or in taking part in
festivals or new moons or Sabbaths;*

Rules continued, as the text at 2.21 attests. The writer exhorts members not to be limited by regulations about handling, tasting, touching:

Μὴ ἄψη μηδὲ γεύση μηδὲ θίγης,
Don't touch nor taste nor take hold of,

I agree with commentators who say these condemnations and prohibitions referred to members who still carried on with Jewish practices within the community of the *ekklesia*.¹⁰⁷ The writer insists that members not be limited by regulations about handling, tasting, touching. Jewish law included strict adherence to cleanliness and dietary restrictions. Jewish presence in the Lykos Valley is confirmed, particularly at Laodikeia. Given the interaction between the cities of the Lykos Valley, through trade, travel, social and political activities,

¹⁰⁷ Clement *Stromata* 6.5 citing the *Preaching of Peter*, comments that Jews worshipped *angeloi* and the month and moon. Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 145. Arnold, "Sceva, Solomon and Shamanism," 8 prefers a Jewish background to these prohibitions; as Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 139.

as well as the collaborative ministry referred to by Trebilco, Jews in Kolossai, and Jewish Christians in the *ekklesia* there were likely.¹⁰⁸

The practices condemned in 2.16, 21 form part of the rules that have been brought in by some members of the *ekklesia*. Adherence to human made rules over fully accepting the primacy of Christ appears to be a major cause of divergence in religious practice. These practices reflect the processes of assimilation. I suggest that people who were full Jews by birth, and who continued to follow the extent of the Jewish law, were present in the *ekklesia*. At least some of these were encouraging others to follow certain rules and regulations. The core ethnic distinctions of Jews formed their cultural identity. Distinctions included Sabbath observation and dietary rules. Practice of these things is named in 2.16. Compromise at this level meant radical departure from ethnic Judaism.

The prohibitions against tasting and touching here, in addition to the severe practices of the body, the ἀφειδία σώματος (2.23), indicate fasting.¹⁰⁹ Practices of bodily asceticism belong to the Graeco-Roman tradition of communicating with a deity. The *mantis*, the one who received the prophetic vision from the god, underwent a period of fasting and sexual abstinence in preparation for receiving the word of the god in oracle processes.¹¹⁰ I suggest that from the warning in the letter about the lack of value in bodily asceticism through fasting and abstinence, that they were οὐκ ἐν τιμῇ τινι πρὸς πλησμονὴν τῆς σαρκός, of no value except for the satisfaction of the flesh, ideas of divine communication originating in oracle processes influenced the practices of the *ekklesia*. I will explore this further in the analysis of the Oinoanda oracle and the hymn below.

¹⁰⁸ Cadwallader, private correspondence 2016, disputes the presence of Jews in Kolossai. His expansion of this theory is to be given in a forthcoming article.

¹⁰⁹ Francis, "Humility and Angelic Worship," 115.

¹¹⁰ Iamblichos *On the Mysteries* 3.11.

Early Christian teachers viewed fasting as beneficial, that it might lead to a revelation from god. It was linked to ταπεινοφρόσυνη.¹¹¹ In Kol 2.20-23 its implication is negative.

Strict adherence to rules and following ascetic practices was a feature of the practices in the *ekklesia* with which the letter writer took issue. Van Broekhoven suggests that a dogmatic approach to these things diminished the value of Christ's work. Authority, he says, lay with rules, more so than even the 'rivals' themselves.¹¹² The use of δογματίζεσθε, to decree, submit to ordinance, in 2.20 emphasises this.

9.3.2 Summing up conflict in Kolossai

In Chapter Two of the letter the writer addressed issues of divergent religious practices which were deterring members of the *ekklesia* away from sole reliance on Christ for salvation. I have suggested that divergent religious practices arose from the activities of individuals and groups coming from diverse cultural backgrounds who brought with them into the *ekklesia* a complex of ideas about accessing god.

In processes of assimilation people hold onto cultural aspects which form their core identity, aspects which are not easily given up to fit into a new group. Those coming from Jewish backgrounds continued in certain practices, such as observing rules around holy days, cleanliness with food (2.16), and prohibitions around tasting and touching certain things (2.21). These practices belonged to core Jewish ethnic distinctions. Accessing the divine for those coming from backgrounds compatible with pagan monotheism continued to be shaped by

¹¹¹ For example, Hermas *Vis.* 3.10.6; Tertullian *De ieiunio adversus psychicos* 11. Apocryphal Jewish-Christian writings such as *Joseph and Asenath* similarly advocate ascetic humility. Francis, "Humility and Angelic Worship," 116.

¹¹² Van Broekhoven, "Social Profiles," 82. Even 2.16 κρινέτω, judge, and 2.18 καταβραβεύετω, pass judgement against, suggest judgement based on rules. καταβραβεύω has the idea of athletic contests requiring an umpire.

practices such as *angeloi* devotion and self-abasement, even the quest for visionary experience (2.18).

Those who undertook such practices believed in the cosmological supremacy of Christ, which is affirmed in the letter through the hymn.¹¹³ However they distanced Christ's supremacy from his primary role in accessing god. This they replaced with other rules and rituals.

Diversity of cult background of members attracted by a new type of religious group created a range of divergent practices in the *ekklesia*. The result of diverse people coming together in worship of a highest god were the issues which modern commentators have identified as sources of conflict

Scholars have previously identified aberrant rituals as a basis for conflict and division in the *ekklesia*, issues which the letter attempted to address.¹¹⁴ These rituals were based in human traditions in which even the elements of the universe, as well as those figures which inhabited the philosophical structure of the universe, must be negotiated to reach the supreme god. An emphasis in achieving a vision of heaven through abasement of self, following strict ascetic practices, observation of rituals around the Sabbath, new moon, festivals, food and drink, leading to *angeloi* worship, characterised the divergent practices at Kolossai.

The response to reported conflict in the *ekklesiai* was the writing of the letter. The issues identified above that caused conflict in Kolossai were addressed throughout the letter, including the hymn (1.15-20).

Through the evidence of the letter and the points of conflict noted in this chapter, it appears that the *ekklesia* of at least Kolossai (and

¹¹³ Van Broekhoven, "Social Profiles," 75.

¹¹⁴ Arnold, "Sceva, Solomon, and Shamanism," discusses a type of Judaism based on the figure of Sceva (Acts 19.13-16), in which reliance on rituals to access god diverted people away from Christ as mediator. Within this type of Judaism, ritual practices were of issue. MacDonald, 68, also reports the writer's concern with rituals, naming the ethical implications for what was experienced by people in ritual as problematic.

possibly the other *ekklesiai* of the Lykos Valley) exhibited mixed levels of assimilation into the new group. Some members held onto former practices to a higher degree than others, depending on their level of assimilation into the *ekklesia*.¹¹⁵

It was difficult for new groups to establish core identities because they were new, and people from diverse backgrounds were attracted into them. These people brought the practices of previous allegiances with them. In Kolossai, core identity was shaped around the cosmological supremacy of Christ, achieved through the cross. This is best expressed through the hymn at 1.15-20. The letter writer intended to affirm this position over other influences.

9.4 The hymn for Kolossai

The hymnic portion of the letter (1.15-20) answers the question, ‘Who is god?’ This question stands behind the issues addressed by the letter, the divergent religious practices which created conflict and division in the *ekklesia*. This is the question which people from various cultic backgrounds carried with them through the new religious situation, and was given expression as they entered the *ekklesia*. Who is god? And the hymn responds, ὅς ἐστιν...

This was the same question asked of the god Apollo at the beginning of the theological oracle quotation found in Porphyry, σὺ εἶ θεὸς ἢ ἄλλος, ‘Are you god or is another?’ Again, in Lactantius’ version Apollo is asked, *quid esset, aut quid esset omnino deus*, who he is, or who is god at all? Both oracle and hymn come out of monotheistic contexts. People seeking answers to the question understood god as one. Between the

¹¹⁵ The writer refers to previous attitudes and practices at 1.21 and 3.7.

hymn and the oracle, the issue was not whether god was one, but who was god.

At Kolossai the approach to god was mixed up with practices from religious traditions other than Christianity. To those behind the composition of the letter, the practice of deferring to mediatorial figures (2.18) reduced the sufficiency of Christ.

The hymn provided an answer to the identity of god. The intention behind its inclusion was to provide a model of interpretation of Christ as the means to experience god, and to address divergent religious practices. The hymn was the meeting point for those who practiced the deferent rituals and those who followed the foundational ways given at Kolossai by Paul's faithful colleagues. All expressions of the new Christians in the Kolossian *ekklesia* agreed on the universal supremacy of Christ as expressed in the hymn.¹¹⁶ It was the interpretation of the hymn that was unresolved. In assimilation terms, the hymn rested in the boundary areas between different cultural groups, in the acculturation and integration zone, the space where creative possibilities emerged, where new expressions of god gave voice.

Kol 1.15-20 is a high point in the letter, in vocabulary, poetic resonance, theological precision, cultural inclusion.

Discussion of the hymn in the letter cannot be separated from the issues of division addressed by the writer or it loses its epistolary context and becomes an isolated text removed of meaning. The hymn was set within the letter for the purposes of addressing the conflicting issues to which the writer identified and responded. Conflict and hymn are connected.

¹¹⁶ Van Broekhoven, "Social Profiles," 88.

Kol 1.15-20 was well known in the early *ekklesiai*, before the Nicene council in 325 CE. Edsall and Strawbridge find reference to these verses in over 670 pre-Nicene Christian sources.¹¹⁷ These verses contributed to the development of Christian doctrine on the divine-human nature of god in Christ. However, no occurrence of the verses has been found in sources that predate the hymn.

Scholarly debate has recently focussed on whether Kol 1.15-20 can be defined as a hymn, as has previously been widely accepted.¹¹⁸ Here I do not enter the debate but refer the reader on.¹¹⁹ Whether the verses constitute a formal hymn or not, the material is clearly different in tone and vocabulary than the rest of the letter. It makes uses of elevated language. When read aloud there is a song quality to the verses. It stands out. I will call Kol 1.15-20 a hymn, regardless of debates over what an ancient hymn is. The verses are distinct in the letter. They represent the use of poetic tools such as balance and identifiable strophes, assonance, alliteration and repetition. Mnemonically it ‘works’ as a hymn, or piece of poetry, whether sung, spoken, read or heard.

Matthew Gordley presents a well thought out definition of an ancient hymn which I am satisfied to accept: “A hymn is a self-contained composition of relatively short length whose contents are primarily centered on praise of the divine in a descriptive or declarative style, which may be expressed in direct address or in the third person, whether in poetry, or prose, and whose primary purpose may have

¹¹⁷ Benjamin Edsall and Jennifer R. Strawbridge, “The Songs we Used to Sing? Hymn ‘Traditions’ and Reception in Pauline Letters,” *JSNT* 37/3 (2015): 301.

¹¹⁸ See for example Edsall and Strawbridge, “The Songs we Used to Sing,” 303 who say that ancient Christian authors did not refer the Kol 1.15-20 in their usages of the verses as a hymn. Neither did they dispute Paul’s authorship. See also Matthew E. Gordley, *Teaching through Song in Antiquity: Didactic Hymnody among Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Christians*, WUNT 2.302, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 273-4, on the paucity of evidence upon which claims that Kol 1.15-20 is a hymn are based.

¹¹⁹ See extensive discussion in Edsall and Strawbridge, “The Songs we Used to Sing.”

been liturgical or instructional.”¹²⁰ Within this definition the Kolossian hymn fits.

Gordley’s broad definition refers to the different types of hymns, including prose hymns, metrical hymns, cultic hymns, didactic hymns, liturgical hymns, philosophical hymns.¹²¹ He does not include theological oracles, or general oracles, which I think he could, based on the hexametrical construction of the products of the Asian oracle centres of Klaros and Didyma, for which there is the most evidence, and that many oracles praise and exalt a god. Hymn singing formed part of the process of oracle consultation.¹²² Given that Kol 1.15-20 does not metrically scan with any consistency, I conclude with Gordley, that it is a prose hymn.¹²³

I am unconvinced that the author of the letter wrote the hymn.¹²⁴ Despite the developed Christology that pervades the letter, the dissimilarities between the poetic construction of the hymn and the rest of the letter are too great. This leads me to agree with Lohse,¹²⁵ Dunn,¹²⁶ MacDonald,¹²⁷ and Gordley,¹²⁸ among others, that it is a portion of a Christian text which has been selected for use in the letter because it assists the author with addressing the issues in the

¹²⁰ Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 32-3, and at 40, he claims that a broad interpretation of the meaning of ‘hymn’ is necessary for making connections between the Kolossian hymn and hymns from the Jewish and Graeco-Roman world.

¹²¹ Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 33.

¹²² *DI* 217.6-9 – the point of the oracle consultation phase at which hymns were to be sung in praise of the prophesying god. See Chapter Eight section 8.5.2.

¹²³ Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 170, who says that the verses are: “a citation of a prose hymn, one that represents a creative fusion of the features of Jewish psalmody, the conventions of Greco-Roman praise, and the categories of popular Greek philosophical thought.”

¹²⁴ Edsall and Strawbridge, “The Songs we Used to Sing,” 303, note that ancient authors did not dispute the composition of 1.15-20 as by any other than Paul.

¹²⁵ Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 41-2.

¹²⁶ Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, 83.

¹²⁷ MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 65: “The consensus is that these verses represent an independent unit that was inserted into the letter.”

¹²⁸ Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 170.

Kolossian *ekklesia*. No matter whether the letter writer or someone else composed the hymn, it is integral to the letter.

As I take the position that the hymn was imported into the text, I accept that sources of Christological hymnody existed to enable this to happen. Such sources were required for theologians and leaders of *ekklesiai* to access for teaching the congregations that gathered and quickly grew into organised religion. The availability of source material for reuse for teaching purposes as the *ekklesiai* developed was not unique to Christianity or Judaism. Source material also existed for Orphic hymns and Isis aretalogies.¹²⁹ Mitchell attests to the availability of source material in the dissemination of theological oracles.¹³⁰

The text of the hymn appears in the UBS³ Greek text as follows:

1.15 ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, **16** ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὀρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀοράτα, εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται, **17** καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν. **18** καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος, τῆς ἐκκλησίας· ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων, **19** ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι **20** καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν, εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ [δι’ αὐτοῦ]* εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

1.15 *he is the icon of the unseen god, firstborn of all creation, 16 for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, the things seen and the things unseen, whether thrones or dominions or first powers or authorities; all things have been created through him and to him, 17 and he is before everything and all things in him have come together. 18 And he is the head of the body, of the ekklesia; he is the beginning, firstborn from*

¹²⁹ Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 150, who refers to a “template” for the aretalogies of Isis; and 164-5, on the existence of hymn books for Orphic collections.

¹³⁰ Mitchell, “Melli,” 152, refers to the replication of inscriptions across the Roman Empire which he presumes were copied from an original. More will be said below about this in the comparison of hymn and oracle.

the dead, so that he might become first in everything, 19 for in him all the fullness of creation delighted to live 20 and through him all things be reconciled to him again, he having made peace through the blood of his cross [through him] whether things on earth or things in heaven.

A textual variant appears in verse 20: δι' αὐτοῦ.¹³¹ The variant is given a {D} rating in the UBS^{3,4} versions of the Greek text. A balance of strong manuscripts support both the phrase's inclusion and omission, which is why the UBS editors were uncertain. Generally, UBS⁴ reduces the letter value given to textual variants from previous editions. In this case however, the editors have retained the same value between editions.

Retaining the variant has several effects. Inclusion emphasises the 'through him,' so that it is conveyed with absolute certainty that the blood of the cross belongs to Christ. This is a critical Christological point in the hymn. In it the humanity in divinity is expressed – διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, through the blood of his cross. This point challenges both Judaism and pagan monotheistic attitudes formed within a Greek philosophically constructed universe. From the perspectives of both Judaism and pagan religion the highest god is separated from created humanity. Christ bridges the strata of the universe. The emphasis of δι' αὐτοῦ strengthens the new view of the highest god in Christ.

Retaining δι' αὐτοῦ provides poetic rhythm. Although the verses do not conform to standard ancient metre, they nonetheless heighten the register of what amounts to a hymn set as prose within an epistolary context.

¹³¹ The textual apparatus for the variant is as follows: δι' αὐτοῦ: p⁴⁶ x A C D^c K P Ψ 048 33 88 181 326 330 451 614 629 630 2492 2495 *Byz Lect* syr^p, h cop^{bo} goth Hilary Chrysostom Theodoret John-Damascus // omit B D* G I 81 104 436 1241 1739 1877 1881 1962 1984 1985 2127 l⁸⁰⁹ it^{ar, c, d, dem, div, e, f, g, mon, x, z} vg cop^{sa} arm eth Origen^{gr, lat} Ambrosiaster Ephraem Cyril Euthalius Theophylact

Omission of the variant supports those who prefer verse 20 (or parts of it), as an addition to the original hymn. My position is to read the variant as part of the hymn as it stands. One of the practices of textual criticism is to regard the ‘harder’ reading as the one more likely to be original. The reason for this is that subsequent editors have struggled with the more difficult interpretation and either omitted the word or phrase in question, or inserted something else. Retaining δι’ αὐτοῦ is the harder reading.

Most approaches to the hymn have been form critical.¹³² This method has itself been criticised.¹³³ Whilst taking this into consideration, a brief look at the form of the hymn is worthwhile before moving into its interpretation.

I am persuaded to accept that the hymn comprises of two strophes.¹³⁴ If all the verses are included in any reconstruction of the hymn, the logical break is at the end of 1.17, the point at which the expression of the cosmological supremacy of Christ concludes.¹³⁵ From verse 18 redemptive supremacy is expressed. Most scholars agreeing with the two-strophe reconstruction think the break is at 1.18b, with 18a forming a bridge between the two strophes.¹³⁶

The following simple reconstruction of the hymn serves the purposes of the discussion here:

Strophe 1

15a ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου,
15b πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως,

¹³² As Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*; and Christian Stettler, *Der Kolosserhymnus: Untersuchungen zu Form, traditionsgeschichtlichem Hintergrund und Aussage von Kol 1,15-20*, WUNT 131 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

¹³³ Edsall and Strawbridge, “The Songs we Used to Sing,” 291.

¹³⁴ This is the position of most scholars according to Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 9. See the thorough discussion in Stettler, *Der Kolosserhymnus*, 86, 314-17 and throughout, who takes the position that the hymn is composed of two strophes.

¹³⁵ Stettler, *Der Kolosserbrief*, 92 also separates the strophes at the end of this verse.

¹³⁶ Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 9.

- 16a ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,
 16b τὰ ὄρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα,
 16c εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι·
 16d τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται,
 17a καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων
 17b καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν.

Strophe 2

- 18a καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς ἐκκλησίας·
 18b ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν,
 18c ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων,
 19 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι
 20a καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς αὐτόν,
 20b εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ δι'
 αὐτοῦ
 20c εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

This setting out of the hymn retains all the content. In doing this I place the hymn as it stands in the letter in the context of a Christian composition intended for worship and instruction. I note that many scholars have identified redactions to the text in their quest to find the 'original' hymn. In particular, 1.16, 18a (τῆς ἐκκλησίας) and 20b (εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ δι' αὐτοῦ), and some include 20c (εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς) as additions to an original hymn.¹³⁷ Lohse suggests that there is no reason to consider any further additions than those he thinks were clearly Christian insertions at 18a τῆς ἐκκλησίας, and 20 διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ.¹³⁸ Without the inclusion of τῆς ἐκκλησίας to 18a the verse could be understood as belonging to the cosmological role of Christ rather

¹³⁷ Van Broekhoven, "Social Profiles," 85. If this is so he says, an original hymn would have affirmed the origin and reorganisation of cosmos through Christ. Additions would clarify otherwise absent or obscure references to Christ's mediatorial work.

¹³⁸ Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 44.

than a redemptive role.¹³⁹ However as I have left unchanged any wording in my reconstruction of the hymn then I am satisfied to make a break between strophes at the end of 1.17.

There are many different reconstructions of the hymn.¹⁴⁰ Stettler even provides a Hebrew version of the hymn to strengthen his view that Jewish influence was behind the construction of the hymn in Greek.¹⁴¹ In considering the various versions, it is wise to acknowledge the cautious advice of Lohse regarding any reconstructive attempt.¹⁴² Material identified by other scholars as additions or deletions to an elusive original he says, only complements and expands what has already been laid down in the hymn.¹⁴³ In the conventions of ancient hymnody, it was unnecessary for a prose hymn to contain exactly balanced strophes.¹⁴⁴ Therefore a break after 1.17 fits the form of a prose hymn. Any quest for a balanced, perfectly composed hymn does not suit the broader definitions of prose hymnody.

I am satisfied, with Wright, to include all the verses as they appear in the biblical letter in the construction of the hymn.¹⁴⁵ For the purposes of this thesis I suggest that the verses as they appear in the epistolary text provided the writer a means of responding to the divergent practices in the *ekklesia*, whether all the verses matched the original source of the hymn or otherwise.

¹³⁹ MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 66, says that the cosmos was frequently compared to a body in the ancient world. Without the τῆς ἐκκλησίας, a cosmological interpretation of the verse could be taken.

¹⁴⁰ Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 5-18 outlines most of them.

¹⁴¹ Stettler, *Der Kolosserbrief*, 93. Stettler does not think the hymn was originally composed in Hebrew, but at 79 he does states a background in Jewish psalmody: "Formal ist Kol 1,15-20 in feierlicher, liturgische-gehobener Sprache gehalten und ganz vom alttestamentlichen Psalmenstil geprägt."

¹⁴² Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 44.

¹⁴³ Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 44.

¹⁴⁴ Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 44.

¹⁴⁵ N. T. Wright, "Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1.15-20," *NTS* 36 (1990): 444-68. I do not however, agree with his stance on the authorship of the hymn to Paul, or the original inclusion of the hymn in the letter.

The first strophe represents Christ as god's agent in creation and the second strophe represents Christ as god's agent in redemption.¹⁴⁶ There is movement between the cosmic role and the mediating role between human beings and god. This is emphasised by the reversal of heaven and earth in 1.16: ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, and 20: ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. Heaven is placed first in 1.16, earth first in 1.20. This is an artful way of transmitting a movement between Christ's roles, one that addresses a problem in the *ekklesia* in which the mediatorial role of Christ was not understood as sufficient.

The roles of Christ in creation and redemption are expressed in the strophes with definitions: ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, Christ is icon of the unseen god (1.15); ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, (1.18b) Christ is beginning, firstborn from the dead. There is separation between the eternal and the mortal, and Christ is the bridge, the means of access across this gulf.

9.4.1 Interpreting the hymn

I have established that the hymn is linked to conflict in Kolossai through its response to divergent cultic practices. Interpretation of the hymn must take account of the varied cultural membership of the *ekklesia*. The wider context of the cultural environment stands behind the hymn.

Much scholarship has accompanied the interpretation of the Kolossian hymn. The contribution here will be to add to views which include a diversity of cultural group background in the community, to understanding a Hellenistic philosophical construction of the universe, and to monotheistic expressions of god which crossed cultural groups. Rather than taking a view that Jewish wisdom tradition alone stood

¹⁴⁶ MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 65; Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 42.

behind the hymn,¹⁴⁷ I continue to develop ideas of pagan monotheistic and dispersed Hellenistic Jewish religious practices as influential on the appearance of the hymn in the letter. These practices connect with the attitudes and rituals discussed in the section above on conflict.

Jewish wisdom tradition developed from the accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and Proverbs 8.¹⁴⁸ The tradition continued in the Hellenistic environment of dispersed Judaism through philosophical writers such as Philo. It may well be that the Christ implied in the Kolossian hymn has a parallel in Proverbs, especially 8.22-31. The wisdom figure of Proverbs has been identified in this way by scholars such as Denis Edwards in his explication of the Sophia-Christ.¹⁴⁹ It is reasonable to suggest that LXX 8.22: κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ, the Lord created me the beginning of his journeyings into his works, resounds with the πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, the firstborn of all creation of Kol 1.15. The one acting as ἀμόζουσα, a joiner (as in building or woodworking)¹⁵⁰ παρ' αὐτῷ, alongside him (the Lord) of 8.30 performs a similar role to Christ, who shares in the creating role: ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, and τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται, (Kol 1.16).

Jewish wisdom tradition provides one context for the source background of the hymn and the context into which it was composed. In addition to Jewish wisdom, there are connections in the hymn with Graeco-Roman philosophy. A philosophical view of the universe crossed Judaism and traditional paganism and was a background to

¹⁴⁷ Van Broekhoven, "The Social Profiles," 75 n. 7 says the hymn draws its imagery from wisdom literature of early Judaism. This, he claims, has been demonstrated through modern scholarship. See also MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 66; Stettler, *Der Kolosserbrief*, 86-94, 314-15.

¹⁴⁸ This is expounded on by Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 19-20, 67-8.

¹⁴⁹ Denis Edwards, *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology* (Homebush, NSW: St Paul's, 1995).

¹⁵⁰ *NRSV* has 'master worker' as a translation of the Hebrew.

the various practices, pagan and Jewish, noted as conflict through the letter.

The letter highlights similarities with Graeco-Roman philosophy. The Platonic view of the structure of the universe, as analysed in Chapter Six, reveals these influences.¹⁵¹ The θεὸς ἀοράτος, the unseen god (1.15) is the creating divine source that exists in the perfect immaterial realm inaccessible to created beings. Everything in heaven and earth that is seen by mortals or unseen is created in this ultimate divinity: ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὄρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα (1.16). Nothing is excluded.

The letter writer intends that the one in whom τὰ πάντα is created is identified with Christ. The instruction of other material in the letter is that Christ is the εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, the icon of the unseen god (1.15), who is the means of approach to the highest god. One must hold fast to the head (2.19) to access this god, who is the same icon, rather than be distracted by other ritual means of approach.

The hymn generates ideas that relate to the role of the δημιουργός,¹⁵² the maker of the world, the one described in Plato's *Timaios*.¹⁵³ The *demiurge* is first, the beginning, which connects with ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή, (1.18), and the first is presented in the hymn as the πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως (1.15), the first born of creation. The *demiurge* gazes into the perfect realm in which the invisible god exists. The *demiurge* himself is εἰκὼν, (1.15) the icon, the perfect image. From the perfect images of the exclusive realm of the invisible god, the material comes into being. He is the agent, the mediator, the one through whom all things are created, things in heaven and on earth, the seen (the physical) and

¹⁵¹ See Chapter Six, section 6.4.

¹⁵² Interestingly a translation of δημιουργός is a skilled worker, which calls to mind the designation of the σοφία in Proverbs 8.

¹⁵³ Plato *Timaios* 40 C; also, *Republic* 530 A. In Neoplatonic philosophy, the δημιουργός is a name of god. Philo 1.632: δημιουργός ἐξ ὄντων, *out of being*, a Fabricator, opposed to Creator, κτίστης ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων, *not created out of being*.

unseen (the spiritual) (1.16, 20). With Christ, there is no need for *angeloi* to mediate the supreme god. Christ as *demiurge* explains the divine nature of Christ that fits the philosophically construed universe.

Divine and semi-divine beings inhabit the stratified universe. They are represented in the hymn as the θρόνοι, κυριότητες, ἀρχαί, ἐξουσίαι, (1.16) thrones, dominions, first powers, authorities. These exist above the mortal realm, yet have mediatorial interaction with it. They manifest the powers of the unseen god. A pagan ritual expression of this Platonic interpretation of the universe is found in the confessional practices of Phrygia and Lydia.¹⁵⁴ In these, the gods of justice, Mēn, Hosios and Dikaios, even Apollo in some contexts, were honoured by people who committed a wrong doing because these gods represented the power of a highest god whom the people could not see and could only access through this way. Similarly, divine beings in the role of *angeloi* brokered the power of the unseen god. These practices were directed at the highest god, and as such they fit into pagan expressions of monotheism.

Some scholars identify the θρόνοι, κυριότητες, ἀρχαί, ἐξουσίαι of 1.16 as demonic beings who divert Christians away from Christ.¹⁵⁵ An emphasis on the δαίμονες as evil spirits has created a distorted view of these beings as existing in opposition to a highest god, rather than as inhabitants of a divine/semi-divine hierarchy with mediatorial roles of administration of the powers of a highest god.

This view of the ordering of things is a human way of understanding the universe, where created, mortal people cannot see the highest god but ritually honour the powers of this god. They grapple for a means for connection. In the hymn they hear how god comes to them in a new way, διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ, (1.20) through the blood of his

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter Five, section 5.6 for a full description of the confessional practices.

¹⁵⁵ As Arnold, "Sceva, Solomon and Shamanism," 22.

cross. Christ is presented as superior to the thrones, dominions, first powers and authorities, all things on heaven and earth.

The synthesis of Jewish wisdom expressed in the creation texts and in Jewish Hellenistic philosophers with Graeco-Roman philosophy, and pagan and Jewish monotheistic practices form a plausible cultural background to the hymn. This is not a syncretistic product, but an expression of the diversity of groups emerging into the new religious situation and interacting with each other. These things represent the human environment of Asia Minor which are embedded in the hymn.

9.5 Oracle and hymn in context

At the inception of this thesis I listened to the Oinoanda oracle and heard sounds of echo in the Kolossian hymn. The journey from that point to now represents many stops and turns along the way. But the echo remains. This leads me to continue to say that the oracle and the hymn, despite being separated by over a century, derive from a common world in which views of god from different cultural groups were coalescing. Both texts emerge from a changing religious situation. Both texts represent monotheistic attitudes toward god. Both texts respond to the question, 'Who is god?'

It is important to state at the outset that there is no direct influence between hymn and oracle. One is not dependent on the other. Rather it is indications of a shared cultural environment which stand out.

Huttner makes similar observations about comparisons between Christian ideas and practices in the context of pagan cults in the Lykos Valley. Huttner takes the cultic singing in honour of Apollo which devotees engaged in with similar enthusiasm to the praises sung to the Christian god, saying that, "In none of these cases can mutual influence or dependence be demonstrated, but geographical proximity supports the hypothesis that contemporaries were well aware of the

similarities as well as the conceptual differences in detail.”¹⁵⁶

Assimilation theory shows that groups of people from different backgrounds entered boundary areas, the zones of acculturation and integration with their permeable borders (See Fig. 1), and traded ideas and customs, taking on certain things, staying clear of others. The new *ekklesiai* existed in boundary spaces of acculturation and integration between pagan and Jewish groups. Members entering brought with them ideas about god and practices of approach to god. They shared the core identity features of Christianity taught in the *ekklesia*. At Kolossai this included the cosmological supremacy of Christ and the redemptive power of the cross. However, members differed in ritual practices. These practices included adherence to certain rules and deference to mediatorial beings. These things give insight into the diverse backgrounds of members and to what they held onto from previous group allegiances.

Cult expressions of pagan monotheism also belong in the acculturating spaces between different groups. In these spaces, traditional paganism, indigenous paganism and Hellenistic Judaism met. The result was pagan monotheistic practices such as *angeloi* devotion, public confession, worship of Theos Hypsistos, the activities of the *theosebeis*, and the voice of the oracle.

The theological hymn for Kolossai and the theological oracle from Oinoanda are evidence of the activity that took place in the acculturating spaces between cultural groups, where the new religious situation developed, and where expression of it took place.

As stated above, later material may elucidate a past situation. The theological oracle postdates the hymn. The oracle reflects a religious situation that was expressive of the monotheistic attitude and the accompanying cultic practices that began in the first century, when the

¹⁵⁶ Huttner, *Early Christianity*, 390-91.

hymn was composed to address the influence of divergent practices and attitudes in the *ekklesia*. There is continuity in the cultural environment which supports the conversation between the earlier dated hymn and the later dated oracle.

Following is a comparison of the oracle and the hymn designed to emphasise the commonalities founded in the shared cultural environment and the shared expression of a highest god which crossed cultural groups.

As I undertake this comparison I am mindful not to assume there is connection without adequately establishing context and providing evidence that is inductive, ie., that lays out facts rather than deducing information from what I would like to fit. Samuel Sandmel's warnings about 'parallelomania' issued soundly in the 1960s still hold today.¹⁵⁷

9.5.1 Comparative analysis of oracle and hymn¹⁵⁸

1.15 ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ

ἀοράτου,

The ὅς, the 'Who,' is Christ in the hymn, the εἰκὼν, icon, the perfect image, of the god that is hidden from sight, the one the oracle refers to as αἰθέρα πανδερκῆ, the all-seeing Aither: separated in the heavens, unseen, but seeing everything – the supreme divinity. This is the creating source, the τοῦτο

¹⁵⁷ Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81/1 (1962): 1, provides a definition of the term, 'parallelomania': "We might for our purposes define parallelomania as that extravagance among scholars which first overdoes the supposed similarity in passages and then proceeds to describe source and derivation as if implying literary connection flowing in an inevitable or predetermined direction."

¹⁵⁸ For the purposes of analysis, references in the Greek to the hymn are in red text and references to the oracle are in green text.

θεός of the oracle, which in the Platonic construction of the universe exists in an exclusive realm, apart from all that comes after, the perfect being.¹⁵⁹ Christ is the visible manifestation of the θεός ἀοράτος, the invisible god. The invisible god dwells in ether/air and ἐν πυρὶ νείων, primal fire.¹⁶⁰

πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως,

The firstborn of all creation: the pre-existing one who is not created, the δημιουργός of Plato's universe who gazes into the realm of perfection.

1 αὐτοφυής, ἀδίδακτος, ἀμήτωρ,

The θεός ἀοράτος of the hymn is expressed through the oracle as αὐτοφυής, the self-generate one, the original divinity who has no mother or teacher.

ἀστυφέλικτος,

Unshaken, undisturbed divinity – solid, unchanging presence.¹⁶¹

2 οὐνομα μὴ χωρῶν, πολυώνυμος,

No room for this presence in a name, many named: one name cannot contain god, many names attempt to.¹⁶² In a multiple cult context there are

¹⁵⁹ Plato *Timaios* 27D-29D.

¹⁶⁰ Version of oracle present in Porphyry Ἐκ τῆς θεοσοφίας, ἡσ φλογμὸς ἀπειρέσιος, boundless flame; and, πυρὸς αἰθερίου, fire of ether, as the dwelling of the god.

¹⁶¹ Xenophanes Fragment 26 reflects the foundational, unmoving quality of the original divinity, the highest god: αἰεὶ δ' ἐν ταύτῳ μίμνει κινούμενος οὐδέν – *always she remains in the same way, never moving*. In the oracle, this quality is described as ἀστυφέλικτος.

¹⁶² The version of the oracle found in Porphyry, Lactantius and the Theosophy contains οὐνομα μὴδὲ λόγῳ χωρούμενον – *a name not made room for in a word*. This different emphasis takes away the polytheistic possibilities of πολυώνυμος, many named. Mitchell, "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos," 86; Parke, *The Oracles of Apollo*, 166. Robert, "Un Oracle," 604-05. See study of the sources of the Oinoanda oracle Chapter Eight, section 8.7.1.

many names for the ὕψιστος, the supreme god, thus the question asked of the oracular Apollo, σὺ εἶ θεὸς ἢ ἄλλος; ‘Are you god, or is another?’¹⁶³ This expression accounts for the abstraction in naming of the highest god in a context of pagan monotheism: the Αἰθέρα πανδερκῆ of the oracle, τὸ θεῖον, the divinity, Θεὸς Ὑψιστος, Theos Hypsistos (god most high), Ὅσιος καὶ Δικαίος, Holy and Just, and the ἄγγελοι, *angeloι*, designations of the power of god.

ἐν πυρὶ ναίων,

Dwelling in fire, the ethereal, heavenly, primal fire – the place of the πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, firstborn of all creation, the πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, firstborn of the dead, (1.15, 18): deity present before all else is created; first in everything, ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων (1.18).

ὅ τούτο θεός·

This is god. ὅς ἐστιν... (1.15), ὅς ἐστιν... (1.18). Who is god? He is...

μικρὰ δὲ θεοῦ μερὶς ἄγγελοι ἡμεῖς.

Apollo responds to the question, ‘Who is god?’ identifying as one of the ἄγγελοι, a mediatorial being between the supreme god and the creation; one who manifests the powers of a highest god. There are others – ἡμεῖς, we, are μικρὰ δὲ θεοῦ μερὶς, a small portion of god. The hierarchy of the universe

¹⁶³ Porphyry Ἐκ τῆς θεοσοφίας.

includes many beings, including ἄγγελοι, and θρόνοι, κυριότητες, ἀρχαί, ἐξουσίαι (1.16). Worship of *angeloi* (2.18) is a response to this universe, a means of accessing god.

1.16 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα ἐν
τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.

By the agency of the ὅς, all things are created in heaven and earth – celestial beings and incarnate beings, including the intermediate entities within the universal hierarchy. This structured universe pervades the understanding of the people in Asia Minor. It forms part of a common cultural background.

τὰ ὄρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα,
εἴτε θρόνοι εἴτε κυριότητες
εἴτε ἀρχαὶ εἴτε ἐξουσίαι·

All things have come into being by this one's agency, things seen and unseen by people: the θρόνοι, κυριότητες, ἀρχαί, ἐξουσίαι, thrones, dominions, first powers, authorities – the hierarchy of δαίμονες, the layers to God: μαικρὰ δὲ θεοῦ μερίς ἄγγελοι ἡμεῖς, we *angeloi* are a small portion of god. These are presented not equally superior to Christ, but a portion or particle, μερίς. Undergirding the building of this hierarchy exist the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (2.8, 20).

τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν

ἔκτισται,

Through this one everything has been created – there is no external agency, no need for the ἄγγελοι of the oracle, or the ἄγγελοι of the hymn. Apollo is redundant before the highest god.

1.17 καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν.

Everything holds together in or by or with him, because ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων (1.18), he is first, πρὸ πάντων, he is before all things, αὐτοφύης, self-generate. It holds together because it must happen through him.

1.18 καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος, τῆς ἐκκλησίας·

In the cosmic body the head is the summit of the hierarchy. In the new expression of the highest god, the gathering of people, the *ekklesia*, has become the body with Christ as its head. The cosmic has come to earth: ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, (1.16, 20).

ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή,

He is beginning, the principle. This is an attribute, as εἰκών, icon, image (1.15), πρωτότοκος, firstborn (1.15, 18), πρὸ πάντων, before everything (1.17), κεφαλὴ, head (1.18), πρωτεύων, first (1.18). In the oracle the attributes are listed: αὐτοφύης, self-generate, ἀδίδακτος, without teacher, ἀμήτωρ, without mother, ἀστυφέλικτος, unshaken, οὐνομα μὴ χωρῶν, not made room for in a name,

πολυώνυμος, many named,
αἰθέρα πανδερκῆ, all-seeing
Aither. Together the attributes
of god in hymn and oracle
emphasise the self-sufficiency,
priority and superiority of the
highest god.

πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν,

The firstborn of the dead.
Christ is supreme in all realms,
the immortal, the mortal,
wherever there are things, ἐν
τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ
ὄρατὰ καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, (1.16), in
the heavens and on earth,
things seen and unseen.

ἵνα γένηται ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτὸς πρωτεύων,

In order again that this god
may be first.

1.19 ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν τὸ

πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι

All the πλήρωμα, the fullness τοῦ
θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, (1.15) of the
unseen god, the highest god,
was pleased to dwell in the ὅς,
Christ. There is no need for
mediation because the highest
god is in him. Of god in the
oracle, Apollo is μεικρὰ δὲ θεοῦ
μερίς, a small portion of god.

20 καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ ἀποκαταλλάξαι τὰ
πάντα εἰς αὐτόν, εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ
τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ,
[δι' αὐτοῦ] εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε
τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

The things in heaven and on
earth have been reconciled
through him through his cross.
This speaks into the cult
specifics of worship:

reconciliation through the cross. The cult space for this is the *ekklesia*. The honouring of god in and through Christ has come to the level of the earth – τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. The priority of the things of heaven and earth have been reversed in this verse from 1.16, in which the things in heaven came first. Who is god is given unique expression in the monotheistic religious traditions of Asia: reconciliation through the blood of Christ's cross. This is the new religious situation.

4 τοῦτο πευθομένοισι θεοῦ περί ὅστις
ὑπάρχει,

This responsorial phrase from the oracle tradition sets up the answer to the question, 'Who is god?'

5 Αἰθέρα πανδερκῆ θεὸν ἐννέπεν, εἰς ὃν

He describes all-seeing Aither, an abstract personification typical of the pagan monotheistic approach to god in Asia Minor. Look into her,

ὀρῶντας

6 εὔχεσθ' ἠώους πρὸς ἀντολίην

pray at the break of day when looking into the sunrise.

ἔσορωντας.

The specific cultic instruction, the rules that shaped the worship of the highest god in Oinoanda fit the geographical context. They have no parallel in the hymn. The cult space is in the worship of Theos Hypsistos. The cultic

instruction is absent in the versions of the oracle found in Porphyry, Lactantius and the Theosophy. Theology and cult practice are grouped together at Oinoanda.

This comparative analysis of hymn and oracle affirms a common cultural environment in which the texts were set, along with a shared world view. The comparison affirms that both texts belong to minority group monotheistic traditions. They both express a highest god. They both respond to a question about the nature and identity of god. This common question was shared across different religious traditions. The language of both the hymn and oracle resound with theological ideas on the supremacy of god.

Gordley has undertaken a comparative analysis of the hymn with an aretalogy of Isis.¹⁶⁴ Whilst an aretalogy is unlike a theological oracle, the comparison nonetheless draws in the wider cultural environment in which the Kolossian hymn is set. Gordley compares an aretalogy from Apuleius with the hymn.¹⁶⁵ In this comparison Gordley identifies common themes between the texts, based on: initial identification, supremacy of Christ/Isis, supremacy in multiple realms, manifestation of the divine, orderer and sustainer of all things, experienced by humanity in cult/church, acts of beneficence.¹⁶⁶ This is not the same type of comparison I have undertaken between the hymn and theological oracle. Rather than thematic comparison as Gordley has done, I have specifically identified a common cultural background, shared philosophical world view, and shared monotheistic ideas

¹⁶⁴ Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 153.

¹⁶⁵ Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11.5.

¹⁶⁶ Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 153.

through a close analysis of language usage, vocabulary and phrase construction.

I suggest that the comparative analysis I have undertaken between the oracle and the hymn indicate that ideas about god moved between cultural groups, and that this process was ongoing and developed through the centuries. The processes of assimilation between cultural groups discussed throughout this thesis show that there was interaction between people of different groups, through the spaces where acculturating and integrative processes took place. Individuals and groups shared some things with each other, while holding onto distinctions critical to their core group identity.

The sharing of religious ideas can be seen in the dissemination of theological texts in the ancient world. Assimilation between groups facilitated the sharing of religious ideas. The oracle of Apollo from Oinoanda is an example, as the reproduction of the first three verses in almost the same form by Lactantius and Porphyry indicates. These same verses appeared in the Theosophy. Mitchell thinks that an inscriptional discovery from Melli in Pisidia provides further evidence that the Oinoanda oracle was disseminated far from its source.¹⁶⁷ The inscription provides an ἐξήγησις, an interpretation (exegesis), of an oracle from Klaros. I agree with Mitchell that the oracle this text refers to is the theological oracle from Oinoanda.

θεοῖς καὶ θεαῖς ἀπὸ ἐξηγήσεως χρήσ- μου Ἀπόλλωνος Κλαρίου ¹⁶⁸	<i>to the male and female gods from an exegesis of an oracle of Apollo Klarios</i>
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¹⁶⁷ Mitchell, "Melli," 153: "I suggest that the oracle in question could well have been the Clarian monotheistic oracle, known from an inscription at Oinoanda (*SEG* 27 933), and quoted or alluded to by a number of authors of late antiquity, most notably Lactantius in the *Divine Institutions* I.7."

¹⁶⁸ Mitchell, "Melli," 151, no. 13.

The inscription was part of the base of a bronze statue, probably of Apollo of Klaros found near a house. There have been found nine other versions in Latin from the western Roman Empire.¹⁶⁹ The text from Pisidia is the only version in Greek. The multiple occurrences of this oracle indicates that the instruction of the oracle, directed at worship of all the gods, θεοῖς καὶ θεαῖς, male and female, had been transmitted much further than the local area of Melli.

Mitchell suggests that the similarity of texts across the versions indicate they were copied from an original, and that they were all set up within a few years.¹⁷⁰ It is significant for this study that the ἐξήγησις, exegesis, or interpretation, (*interpretatio* in the Latin versions) refers to a prior oracle of which the instruction of the Melli oracle responds, and that most likely the prior oracle was the Oinoanda oracle. If a date as early as 140 CE accompanies the Latin inscriptions, as Mitchell proposes,¹⁷¹ it suggests that either the Oinoanda oracle was inscribed earlier than c. 200 CE,¹⁷² or that a previous iteration predated it. If there was a previous iteration of the

¹⁶⁹ Mitchell, "Melli," 151-2 lists the texts: *CIL* VII 633; *ILS* 3230; *RIB* 1579 from Britannia: *diis deabusque se/cundum interpre/tationem oracu/li Clari Apollinis / coh. I Tungrorum*; *CIL* III 2880; *ILS* 3230a from Dalmatia: *d(iis) deabusq(ue) secundum inter/petrationem (sic) Cla/rri Apollonis*; *CIL* VIII 8351; *ILS* 3230b from Numidia: *dis deabusq(ue) / s[e]cundum / interpreta/tionem ora/culi Cla/ri Apollonis*; *AE* 1929: no. 156; G. Sotgiu *ILSard*: no. 42 from Sardinia: *Dis deabusque / secundum / interpreta/tionem Clari / Apollinis*; *AE* 1986: no. 281 from Italia: *Diis deabusq(ue) / secundum / interpreta/tionem Clari / Apollinis*; *Inscriptions antiques du Maroc*: no. 84 from Mauretania: *[---] oraculi C[larii Apollinis]*; Euzennat 1976; *Inscriptions antiques du Maroc*: no. 344 from Mauretania: *Dis deabusque / secundum interpre/tationem oraculi / Clarii Apollinis*; Letta 1989; *AE* 1991: no. 564 from Italia: *Dis deabusque / secundu[m] / interpr[eta]tio[nem] / o[raculi] / Clarii Apollinis* or *C[larii / Apollinis]*; *AE* 1990: no. 545; Pereira Menaut 1991: no. 60 from Hispania Citerior: *Dis d(eabus)q(ue) / ex interp/retation(e) / oraculi / Clari / Apollinis C./AD sacr/u[m] c.6* / --- See also Merkelbach and Stauber; E. Birley, "Die cohors I Tungrorum und das Orakel des klarischen Apollo," *Germanica* 23: 189-90.

¹⁷⁰ Mitchell, "Melli," 152. He suggests a date any time after 140 CE and that imperial pressure ensured the transmission of the exegesis. Mitchell bases this date on a study by E. Birley, "Cohors I Tungrorum and the Oracle of Clarian Apollo," *Chiron* 4 (1974): 511-13 [Reprinted in *The Roman Army* (collected papers): 365-7].

¹⁷¹ See above note.

¹⁷² See discussion in Chapter Eight.

Oinoanda oracle, it means there was likely a source from which the Oinoanda text derived.

The Melli oracle, which prescribes honour θεοῖς καὶ θεᾶῖς, to the male and female gods, is an affirming interpretation intended to be heard in the circles of traditional paganism. It also indicates that the oracle which was being interpreted was controversial enough, or innovative enough, to require interpretation and dissemination.¹⁷³

In the Melli oracle it is understood that there is a highest god, as reported by Apollo himself in the Oinoanda oracle. The Melli oracle also affirms that the traditional gods alongside Apollo, who is *angelos* in the Oinoanda inscription, have a place and were worthy of worship. Thus, the inclusion of all the gods. Mitchell says: “Claros explained that even though the Olympians ranked below the highest god, it was right to continue to worship them in the traditional way.”¹⁷⁴ This sentiment picks up on the philosophical monotheism taught by Plato, whose characters discerned a supreme deity but continued to worship the traditional gods.¹⁷⁵

The Melli text was found close to its original setting. As discussed in Chapter Seven, Mitchell locates the text in a room within a house dedicated to cultic worship of Theos Hypsistos.¹⁷⁶

Although worship of Theos Hypsistos was directed at the highest god, the Melli inscription interprets the context to include the other gods, even though they were lesser in status. Mitchell’s concludes that the

¹⁷³ Mitchell, “Melli,” 153.

¹⁷⁴ Mitchell, “Melli,” 154.

¹⁷⁵ Plato *Timaios* 27B 9-C 1-4. At the outset of the exposition of the nature of the universe Socrates encourages Timaios to begin with invoking the gods: σὸν οὖν ἔργον λέγειν ἄν, ὦ Τίμαιε, εἴη τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο, ὡς ἔοικεν, καλέσαντα κατὰ νόμον θεοῦς. Ἄλλ', ὦ Σώκρατες, τοῦτό γε δὴ πάντες ὅσοι καὶ κατὰ βραχὺ σωφροσύνης μετέχουσιν ἐπὶ παντὸς ὀρμῇ καὶ μικροῦ καὶ μεγάλου πράγματος θεὸν αἰεὶ που καλοῦσιν - *so Timaios, it may be your job to speak after this, as it seems, after the custom of calling on the gods. Of course, Socrates, as many people sharing even little sense at the start of every matter either small or large, always call upon god.*

¹⁷⁶ Mitchell, “Melli,” 153.

Melli text, along with the other nine instances in the western part of the Roman Empire, was not aimed against monotheism, but was a “compromise formula, designed to reconcile increasingly popular monotheism with the concerns of traditional religion.”¹⁷⁷ I agree that this conclusion is plausible in the new religious situation described in this thesis. It reminds us that pagan monotheism in the ancient world was not defined in the way that we think about monotheism today. Monotheism was a flexible designation, as the Melli oracle suggests.

The Melli oracle and the Oinoanda oracle reflect the new religious situation in which understandings of god were changing and new possibilities of choices in cult membership were becoming available. The oracles also exhibit signs of assimilation between cultural groups.

I surmise with confidence that the Melli oracle is evidence that the Oinoanda oracle was disseminated throughout the empire, used to instruct on the developing trend of pagan monotheism and the ongoing place of the traditional gods within that scope. It may represent an attempt to bring the abstract god Theos Hypsistos into the realm of the pagan pantheon. The dissemination of the Melli oracle indicates there was an original text. This was not a new thing in the ancient world. Templates describing god and the manner of worship of gods existed for Orphic hymns and Isis aretalogies.¹⁷⁸ I propose that the Kolossian hymn was also disseminated, that it was a source of Christological hymnody, available for adaptation and teaching in multiple contexts.

Many scholars have considered redactions to the hymn and have attempted to work out the original form. The fact that so many possibilities for its cult background exist provides a basis for agreeing that there was a template for the hymn, and that this template was

¹⁷⁷ Mitchell, “Melli,” 155.

¹⁷⁸ Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context*, 150.

used for different contexts as theological speculation on the nature of god progressed.¹⁷⁹

It is important to note that there are obvious dissimilarities between the oracle and the hymn. Dissimilarities say as much about the people and their environment as do the similarities. The cultic contexts between hymn and oracle were different. The hymn was intended for a developing community of Christians from various cultural backgrounds. It responds to practices of approach to god that diverged from the foundational practices of the *ekklesia*. It sets out the universal supremacy of Christ through his identification with god in philosophical terms. It also describes Christ as a bridge between a common understanding of the universal hierarchy of beings beneath god and the created human state, eliminating the need for mediation. And it names the unique aspect of the Christian approach to god, redemption through the cross.

The oracle responds to a question about the nature of god most likely asked at a significant oracle centre like Klaros. It was situated in the cult context of Theos Hypsistos,¹⁸⁰ an abstract deity quite unlike Christ. The oracle, like the hymn, describes the universal supremacy of the highest god. Unlike Christ who in the hymn is aligned with the highest god, Apollo is differentiated, placed within the universal hierarchy along with others, the *stoicheia*, the thrones, dominions, first powers, authorities, and the *angeloi*. The oracle also delivers cultic instructions.

9.6 Conclusions

¹⁷⁹ In saying this, I note that the hymn has not appeared in any other extant form than the biblical letter.

¹⁸⁰ See Chapter Eight on the physical location of the Oinoanda oracle.

Christianity was a religious group of the new type which offered individual choice in membership. People came into the *ekklesiai* from various backgrounds, both from minority groups and the mainstream. I have established in this chapter that the Christian community in the Lykos Valley was culturally diverse. This meant that members entered with differing levels of Hellenistic acculturation into the Christian group. Some maintained practices from former allegiances while others adhered to the foundational teaching of the *ekklesia*. These things created points of conflict evident in the letter written to the *ekklesiai* of the Lykos Valley.

Conflicting issues centred around strict adherence to rules and deference to mediatorial beings. The writer of the letter knew the cultural environment in which the *ekklesiai* were set and shared in a philosophical world view. It was from this perspective that the writer engaged with the issues of diverging practices of approach to god.

The hymn was placed in the letter as an integral tool for addressing conflict. The hymn sets out the supremacy of Christ in the universe and on earth, in the body of the community. The hymn sets out why mediatorial beings were of no use in accessing the highest god. In the hymn, Christ is the only way to god. The hymn expresses a highest god, and thus is part of the movement of monotheism in the cultural environment of Asia Minor.

I place the Kolossian hymn and the theological oracle from Oinoanda into a comparative context in this chapter. Dependency between texts is not expected. Shared monotheistic ideas between the texts indicate that they belonged to the same cultural world, emerged from the same cultural environment where new expressions of god were being heard.

10. CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, I have investigated the cultural environment of Asia Minor and investigated if it provided a matrix for the expressions of a highest god. I have explored whether expressions of a highest god emerged from minority group settings, beyond the cultural mainstream. The results of this study indicate that the cultural environment did support a matrix of interconnected people living in diverse communities. It also affirms that monotheistic expressions arose in this environment, especially in minority group contexts.

The cultural environment of Asia Minor in the first three imperial centuries was a vibrant, interactive space, alive with the presence of many groups, many cultures, many people, customs and distinctions. Wherever people met they shared the things that were common. Language, marketplace, roads, public buildings, military service, work environment, entertainment, all drew people into common areas of interaction. The background Hellenistic mainstream was the mediating environment in which these things took place. Within their own groups people shared in the traditions that identified them as distinct. The degree of involvement in the shared spaces, the common ground, indicated how assimilated they were within the Hellenistic mainstream.

Assimilation processes assess the adaptation of people from minority groups within a mainstream. The method of assimilation theory used here has formed a basis for developing the exploration of the groups of people inhabiting the cultural environment of Asia Minor. Analysis of the subprocesses of acculturation and integration have provided insight into the degree of Hellenisation of different groups of people.

The method of assimilation theory applied to minority groups in Asia Minor, including Jews, indigenous rural dwelling pagans, monotheistic

pagans and Christians, indicates that within shared spaces, in the boundaries between groups, integration and acculturation took place. These processes led to degrees of success and mobility for minority group members within the wider structures of society. The same processes could also produce dissimilation and introversion of groups, leading to the stronger retention of core group distinction. In the spaces of acculturation and integration, new ideas emerged. As cultures engaged, creative things took place. In the same spaces confrontation and conflict were present.

This study affirms that the cultural mainstream of Asia Minor was Hellenisation. The Hellenistic cultural environment resisted domination by cultural Romanisation. Hellenisation was an urban phenomenon that was tolerant of indigenous group and other minorities. This permitted minority groups to remain distinct. It also enabled minority groups to participate in mainstream cultural activities without compromising core group distinction. Diverse cultural groups and practices flourished within the Hellenistic mainstream of Asia Minor. This shows that the cultural environment was an enabling matrix for the adaptation and integration of many groups and individuals.

The first three centuries CE witnessed changes away from the constraints of traditional paganism in Asia Minor. In a new religious situation, new cults appeared, creating a religious marketplace. These cults required voluntary membership and commitment. They provided a personal satisfaction that was lacking in the static, embedded structures of pagan religion. Individuals had a new role in this situation. Christianity was one such new group. Practices associated with local justice and devotion to abstractly named deities formed part of the new religious situation. Monotheistic ideas joined the religious currency of the marketplace.

Within a new religious situation pagan monotheism began to be expressed in cultic form. Pagan monotheism developed from philosophical foundations and a widespread understanding of a hierarchically constructed universe. Gods inhabited the strata of the universe. A supreme god existed above and beyond the universe as an original, creating source. Devotion to a highest god, Theos Hypsistos, became evident in epigraphical sources. People attracted to monotheism found space in cults of Theos Hypsistos. They were also accommodated in the boundary areas of Judaism, in synagogue, and in the assimilating groups of god-worshippers, the *theosebeis*. Exciting evidence of the *theosebeis* from Aphrodisias invites further investigation into the relationship of this group with the wider Jewish community in that city.

In this thesis, I have dismantled the term 'syncretism' to describe cultic practices which diverged from traditional representations of Judaism and paganism. I have replaced syncretism with an appreciation for the positive processes of assimilation. Assimilation processes show that diversity in cult expressions were congruent with maintenance of core group distinction.

Within the new religious situation, pagan religious institutions founded on traditional oracle centres adapted to the changing environment. Theological oracles were products of oracle centres that continued to be vibrant instruments of pagan religion. I examine the theological oracle from Oinoanda for evidence of pagan monotheism and connection with a cult of Theos Hypsistos. The results of this show that the theological wisdom coming from centres such as Klaros and Didyma were sophisticated and adaptive to the changing religious views and needs of people and cities who accessed the sites.

Christian groups also attracted people with monotheistic attitudes toward god. Within Christian communities Jewish and pagan practices

were expressed to varying degrees, vying with the foundational teaching of early missionaries such as Paul and his co-workers. In this study, the Letter to the Kolossians provides evidence of the assimilating influences of both pagans and Jews. The resulting conflict highlights that the new religious situation was an intense environment. In this environment were competing practices, differing views on how the common belief in a highest god through Christ took shape in cult.

I have shown that the method of assimilation theory is a tool of investigation into the human experience of people living in the ancient world. Assimilation theory provides insights into culture and how people interacted and remained culturally distinct. Assimilation theory could usefully be taken up as a method for biblical criticism. It works well with the already established social science criticism and social identity theory.

A significant task of this thesis is the drawing together of the theological oracle from Oinoanda and the Kolossian hymn. The comparative analysis of these texts provides evidence that they were expressions of a highest god emerging from a common cultural environment, facilitated by a new religious situation. I refined my initial ideas of similarity between the texts throughout the research, and determined that the texts were not dependent on each other. This relieved the issues of anachronism. I affirm nonetheless that these texts have the same background cultural environment. Both express a high god, Christ in the hymn, Theos Hypsistos in the oracle. The universe of both texts is conceived in the same way. The unseen god is beyond human access, beyond the hierarchy of other beings. The language and vocabulary used for god resonates between the hymn and oracle. The poetic constructions of both reveal the high aims of the original speakers to present the fullness and superiority of god in fluid, beautiful terms.

Future studies would benefit from exploring the idea of a Christian theological text such as the Kolossian hymn being a model of expressing the nature of a highest god, a precedent, that was taken up later by pagans. As pagan monotheism developed in and beyond the first three centuries CE, producing theological oracles, resources were needed as ideas were disseminated. Texts such as the hymn may have provided a template. Centres like Klaros and Didmya may have looked toward Christianity for examples of defining the nature of god, especially as competition between cults grew in the lead up to Christianisation of the cultural mainstream. The common cultural background established in this study provides the matrix for drawing together expressions of a highest god from different cultural groups.

In conclusion, the cultural environment of Asia Minor was a matrix for expressions of a highest god. These expressions flourished in minority group contexts. They emerged from different cultural groups who came together in spaces where creative ideas, new religious practices and attitudes toward god were shared. Monotheistic Christianity and Judaism were minority groups. Indigenous rural groups who followed practices identified in this study as monotheistic in attitude, were minorities. Followers of Theos Hypsistos did not belong to the mainstream, especially if they practiced exclusivity in worship. The highest god manifested in the spaces where people met, beyond the mainstream.

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